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[THE MAN FROM YORKSHIRE.]

FATE.

By the Author of "Nickleboy's Christmas-Box,"
"Maurice Durant," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LII.

If we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil-long
Of him who treasures up a wrong. Byron.

An hour afterward Sir Ralph heard a knock at the door, and Lillian opening it found the landlady outside.

"If you please, miss, a person wants to see the gentleman."

"My father do you mean?" said Lillian, half-frightened, but determined, let what might happen, that she would not leave the house or allow Sir Ralph to be carried away even by force.

"Yes, miss."

"Is he a gentleman?" asked Lillian, going outside the door that her father might not hear.

"Oh, law, no, miss! a country fellow, looks like a ploughman."

"Send him up, then," said Lillian, thinking that it might be some messenger from Clarence, and the landlady, calling over the banisters, "You may come up, my man," a pair of heavy feet, with heavy boots, came tramping up.

Lillian had re-entered the room and looked with surprise and suspicion at the apparition of a country clown with tight corduroy trousers, leggings, heavy boots, rubicund face and a shock of red hair.

"You wished to see me?" said Sir Ralph, gravely.

"Ees, I do," said the man, with a grin that stretched his mouth, that was not a bad-looking one.

"Ees, I do. I wants to see 'ee about a matter o' business, yer honour."

"Well? what business?" asked Sir Ralph. "Where do you come from, what's your name?"

"I come from Yorkshire, and me name be Tamothy Speerks."

Sir Ralph stared.
"And your business?" he asked.

"Is over," said the countryman, in quite another voice, and, pulling off his red wig as he spoke, he revealed the features of Clarence Clifford.

Sir Ralph fell back a step or two and clutched the chair.

Lillian uttered a slight cry and sprang forward.
"Oh, how could you? Well, well, I never!" all blushes, smiles, and her hand pressed against her fluttering bosom.

Clarence smiled through his red paint rather sadly.
"I wanted to test my disguise, and I could think of no better plan than this. It has deceived three of you, the landlady, Sir Ralph, and you."

He laid a slight stress on the last "you" that meant "if it can deceive you it should deceive any one."

Lillian, with an expressive downcast expression of the eyes, understood him.

Sir Ralph nodded his head like a mandarin with approval and astonishment.

"Admirable!" he said. "My dear Mr. Clifford, how did you in so short a time conceive and don such a complete disguise? It is masterly!"

"Ay," said Clarence, gravely. "I have had some experience, Sir Ralph. I learnt the art of seeming to be what I am not from a master in the art. That master I have now to deceive; judge then if a disguise must not be perfect!"

"What is this?" said Lillian, touching the wig—which Clarence had thrown upon the table—with one finger and thumb, daintily. "What a horrible thing, and how real it looks. Oh, dear, this is like a play at the theatre!"

"Yes, a tragedy," thought Clarence, but nevertheless smiled encouragingly at her, and speaking to Sir Ralph, said: "I have half a dozen disguises such as this, one of a commercial traveller, another of a sea captain, and so on. Protected by those I am going down to Rivershall. I shall not return till I have hit upon the track, and when I do I may not be able to leave it for a while; but to guard against all deceptions and traps believe no messenger purporting to

come from me unless he brings this as proof of his genuineness."

And he held out a plain gold ring.

Lillian took it and examined it.

"I know a better plan than this," she said. "I might recognize this ring but I could not distinguish it perhaps from a counterfeit; now this," and she drew a gem ring from her finger and held it out to him with a loving look, "this poor old ring I should know from a thousand imitations. Take you mine and wear it and I will take yours"—she did not add "and wear it," but, better still, she pressed it to her lips covertly and slipped it on her finger. "If you send a message let my ring accompany it, and if we return an answer or send to you we'll give the bearer this."

"Capital," said Sir Ralph.

Clarence remained silent for a moment, but Lillian saw him lift his hand to his face and kiss her ring slyly.

"And now," said he, "as there is no time to lose I will be on the road. Sir Ralph, it has struck me that you may be without money. May I presume to offer you a loan?"

And without waiting for an answer he shook Sir Ralph's hand, would not wait for thanks, and opened the door.

Lillian passed out with him and they stopped to say good-bye outside the closed door.

"Good-bye," he said, taking both her hands and looking down into her beautiful, sweet face.

"Good-bye," she said, drawing a little closer and looking up into his eyes wistfully. "Good bye. I feel so sad at your going, I—I feel frightened too, and that's wicked, isn't it? because it is doubting your strength, who have proved yourself so strong; but—but it is hard to part so soon when we have met such a little while ago."

She knew what he was thinking of: that Sir Ralph would never let her marry him; and she was bold, as she called it to herself afterwards, very bold, to show him that she held herself as his for ever more, come what might.

"Hard," he repeated, "to part. Ay, it is. But duty, duty; we must all go when that calls. Good-bye, my darling!"

He still held his face from her, longing for a kiss if only upon her brow. The beautiful girl looked up at him slightly, then cast down her eyes.

"You cannot bear the sight of me in this hideous travestie," he said, wistfully.

"You were always ugly," she said, wickedly, "but now, without your moustache, you are simply frightful."

He met her tender glance that belied her words, and sighed as he turned aside.

"I cannot kiss you now, Lillian, with all this paint and rouge!"

"No," she said, in a low voice, "you can't, but I—"

And raising her head suddenly she kissed him lightly, and before he could clasp her to his breast she broke from him and escaped into the room.

So with that kiss as a god-speed Clarence Clifford started on the trail.

Protected by his disguise, Clarence reached Rivershall undetected, and farther tested his make-up by entering the "Arms" and mixing with the labourers of the village.

From them, seated amongst them in their sanded tap-room, he gained fresh information and a farther clue, for Jim, who had assisted to carry the supposed dead squire to his grave, was one of the number, and when the beer began to warm him commenced his nightly observations upon the weightiness of the squire's coffin.

The strange labourer here offered to stand treat, and Jim, when additionally warmed, went over his whole story with emphasis.

Then there flashed across Clarence's mind the conversation he had half unconsciously listened to when lying in the room above, on the day of the funeral, and, as he patted Jim on the back to encourage him into farther gossip, he thought of the grim farce that the master mind of Melchior had planned, and wondered how these simple people would take it when their lord and mistress came back to life and them, and their coffins were emptied of the deceptive stones.

In this way he spent the first night, pouring out beer and spirits in plenty, and picking up every scrap of information which the simple fellows let fall.

On the morning, in the same disguise, he paid a visit to the home farm, and heard how my lady at the Hall was troubled with weak nerves, and how Miss Lucas was mistress of her mistress and all else at Rivershall.

He heard too of Lord Harcourt's advent and his speedy exodus, and that sent him into a quiet lane to think.

Who was this Lord Harcourt, and what hold had he upon Lady Melville? Was he mixed up in this plot too?

However that might be, Clarence felt that he hated him for something more even than the bullet scar on his left breast, and he vowed that, should her ladyship be implicated, he should have his share of the punishment.

Thinking thus of Lord Harcourt, he strolled—rolled rather in true Berkshire swing—back to the inn, and there, at the threshold, almost ran up against a handsome gentleman with dark, deep eyes, and bright, golden hair. The supposed countryman toppled aside to let the gentleman pass, and as he did so the gentleman shot a sharp glance at him that seemed full of suspicion.

But Clarence had been well tutored, and was profiting by his wicked master's hints and oft-repeated injunctions, and now returned the piercing glance with a stolid yokel stare that satisfied the gentleman, who passed on with a light yet commanding step.

Clarence looked after him, and his eyes flashed. He had recognized him at a glance.

It was Melchior, the swindler, the forger, the murderer!

Longing to fly at his throat, and hand him over to justice then and there, Clarence yet restrained himself, and with tightly compressed lips passed into the public-house to decide upon his next step.

That Melchior was here on the spot was an immense relief to him, for now he could kill two birds with one stone, watch two roads from one point of espial.

He could give a strict attention to what was going on at Rivershall, and at the same time watch the arch plotter.

While he was sitting upstairs thus, and jotting down in his note-book a memorandum of the gossip he had picked up, he heard a sigh, and instinctively looking down saw the faint firelight flickering through a crack in the clumsily laid floor.

Presently, when he had resumed writing again, he heard the sigh repeated, this time with an exclamation of irritable impatience that he knew too well. In a moment he realized the situation.

In the room below, separated from him by only the rough planking, was the man he was tracking!

He listened breathlessly, heard Melchior mutter indistinctly, poke the fire with the old oath, and when he, Clarence, had almost concluded that he was about to leave the room, heard the door open and the unmistakable voice of Kate Lucas speaking.

With his mental faculties undulled by love, Clarence penetrated the mask of the man's honeyed words, and knew that the flowery promise he rolled so trippingly off the tongue was made to be broken and to deceive.

Here was punishment for the woman who had betrayed her innocent charge already—punishment bitter and fearful. But Clarence started with disappointment and rage when he heard Melchior propose that she should set off for the Continent.

To let this false, treacherous, unprincipled creature escape him almost maddened him, and when he thought of all that his Lillian had suffered through her villainess he felt inclined to rush downstairs and cage them both.

But he remembered that he had a weapon in his love for the man who was deceiving her, always ready to his hand, and with a sigh let her go. He heard the low, heartless laugh of the deceiver, and he heard the muttered words "Poor Kate, poor Kate!"

Then he determined not to lose sight of this remaining conspirator even for a moment, lest he should by mere chance keep his promise and follow the woman out of the country.

Accordingly when Melchior set out for the Hall to make himself known to Lady Melville and open out his scheme, Clarence stole down the stairs and hid in the darkness followed him closely.

When the lodge gates shut behind Melchior, Clarence paused and hesitated. Should he follow him any farther?

He felt tempted. Who should say what new and greater villainy might not be on foot? He knew every inch of the grounds, and could make his way all round the house, if need be, blindfolded. To resolve was to perform with the young, eager spirit, and immediately he had made up his mind he ran at the wall, sprang on the buttress, and clinging like a monkey climbed to the top.

Listening for a moment, he dropped into the garden of the lodge, when, as ill-luck would have it, a growl followed the light thud of his descending fall, and a dark shadow sprang upon him.

Quick as lightning he put out his hand and seized the dog; and then as he felt the thick hair a thrill of joy ran through him. It was Lillian's dog, the great Don.

"Don! Don! old fellow, don't you know me?" he whispered in the animal's ear, and immediately Don, with a great whine of delight, sprang up to him and commenced licking him; then, remembering something, fell full length at his feet mournfully. "Poor old fellow!" said Clarence, "you are thinking of your mistress!"

And so touched was he that he caught the great head in his hands and kissed its forehead.

"There's a kiss from your mistress, you dear old fellow!" he said, stroking him; "and please Heaven you shall see her yourself soon."

Then, as the faithful creature seemed bent upon following him, he commanded him to go back to the door of the lodge at which he had been lying, and himself stole quietly along the wall to the shrubbery.

Guided by the lights of the house he made his way to the French windows of the small drawing-room, and paused close to the opening of the sash, listening intently.

He could not see into the room because the curtains had been drawn closely across, but as the door opened and a voice spoke, he knew with a thrill of triumph that he should be able to hear every word.

To say that the man's cold-blooded proposal to wed the miserable lady took his breath away is to say little.

He listened to the disclosures made by both bathed in perspiration, his heart torn both ways; one way in horror of so much villainy, the other in commiseration for the misery and anguish so palpable in the weak voice of the tortured woman.

Although he knew that she was unworthy of pity yet he could not withhold it. Had she not saved his life at the risk of her own? had he not protected her from a man's violence?

There was yet another reason which he knew not of, a thrilling of some more complicated emotion, which caused him to groan aloud both for her sin and her suffering.

However, before the interview was over he had strung himself to his habitual calm, and saw that all his strength and acuteness would be required to overreach the diabolical cunning and audacity which had prompted this new move on the part of his old enemy, Melchior.

When Lady Melville had dropped into her seat with a vacant look, and Melchior had bowed himself from

the room, Clarence left his post and quickly but carefully reached and scaled the wall.

He was anxious to see Melchior's face and accordingly rolled across his path as he was entering the carriage.

Then he rested at a small inn a mile and a half from the "Rivershall Arms," and took care to be placed in a room facing the road so that no horseman could pass without disturbing him.

In the morning, dressed as a commercial traveller, with pack and all complete, he started for London just a quarter of an hour after on the track of his game.

All that day he never lost sight of him, dogging his steps in some carefully prepared disguise or other, and using that art which Melchior had taken such pains years and years back to bestow on him.

That day, for some inexplicable reason, the man postponed getting the licence, and Clarence dogged him back to the hotel and sat at a table behind him, noting with undragging vigilance the bent head and haggard look of the face.

"There is some disease eating him up," he thought. "No face could look like that otherwise. Does he remember at this moment, I wonder, that the way of transgressors is hard?"

Clarence found that the way of those who track transgressors was hard also, for when the bent figure passed him in the coffee-room with a chamber candlestick in his hand he dropped the paper that had shielded his face and rushed to begin his night's work.

From the hotel to the house in Spitalfields was a good walk; it was raining hard, but the young man had strolled along so quickly, and his thoughts and desires had run so much faster than upon his foot-steps, that he was all in a glow of heat when he unlocked the iron door and hopped up the passage.

When he had passed the second panel he stood to listen with little fear, for his loaded revolver was in his hand and hope was in his heart.

Everything had gone well with him, and he smiled grimly as he thought of the good luck which had kept Melchior from paying a visit to the prison which he imagined still held his victims.

Very quietly Clarence pushed aside the screen and entered the large room.

It was empty, and without waiting he passed through the open door and made his way to the kitchen below.

As he expected there he found the old woman faithful to her post, still devoutly waiting the master and her punishment.

Clarence tapped her on the shoulder and she rose with that dreadful cry which the dumb emit in moments of grief or alarm.

He smiled reassuringly and spoke with his fingers to the effect that she need have no fear, that he was not going to hurt her, and that she was to resume her seat.

This she did, and sat rocking herself to and fro, her eyes vacillating between the fire and his face.

Clarence waited until her alarm had subsided, then with a gesture of command signalled to her to the effect that he had something for her to do and that she should expect her to do it.

She replied on her long, lean, claw-like digits that he was her old master Oit, and that she was his servant, a poor, helpless old woman, and would do as he should tell her.

"Where is the Frenchman?" he asked. She shrugged her shoulders in token of contempt, and made out:

"Coward! He was afraid of the master and has gone to France. He said he would shoot him and me for letting the lady and gentleman get away; and he advised me to run. Where have I to run?"

"Nowhere," said Clarence, with a frown. "Now listen! You know him, but you do not know me. He will strike you if he comes back and finds that they have gone, but I will do worse if you tell him who has taken them. Do you understand?"

She nodded and commenced rocking again. "You know that you ought to be in prison!" he said. "Hang perhaps. Hang! And if you do not do as I tell you I will send you there."

She protested that she would obey him, and then Clarence schooled her.

If by any chance Melchior came to the house before the trap Clarence was preparing closed upon him the old woman was to tell him that Sir Ralph and Lillian had been taken away by the nurse.

She was to stick to that let him say or do what he might, and then Clarence promised he would not only refrain from sending her to prison—of which she had a great horror, though assuredly no prison or prison discipline could be worse than the bondage and the life she was living now—but would prevent any one else doing so.

She listened and cowered in her dreadful way at that, and thus impressed Clarence left her and returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER LIII.

He that is thy friend indeed
He will help thee in thy need. *Shakespeare.*

At break of dawn Clarence rose again and set off for his lodgings.

Notwithstanding the success of his plans as far as they had gone he felt somewhat low-spirited. For one thing the magnitude of the issue, the certainty of tracing the crime home to the miserable woman he had seen writhing in Melchior's power, depressed him unaccountably. For another he felt that though he had declared to Lillian hotly that he would never leave her they should most surely have to part eventually.

The approaching encounter with Melchior would lead to a full disclosure of his, Clarence's, early life, and necessitate an everlasting farewell to Rivershall and its high-born inmates.

Alas for all that frenzy of love and devotion! He knew that in honour he could not ask so great a boon at Sir Ralph's hands as his daughter.

"No," he thought, "for them are Rivershall and a happy life restored; for me is some foreign land, where I may toil and perhaps earn forgetfulness of the fact that I am a rogue's mystery and a nameless adventurer."

With this gnawing at his heart he found Sir Ralph at breakfast.

Lillian had a headache and would be down directly, the maid said.

Sir Ralph rose to meet him with eager welcome, and Clarence, who had breakfasted before he started from the hotel, sat down, and with a cup of coffee before him reported progress.

"All is going well then," said Sir Ralph, "and you think we shall be able to circumvent and punish the villain—or rather villains?"

"I think—I hope so," said Clarence, with a sigh, his eyes wandering towards the door.

Sir Ralph nodded eagerly.

"I don't know which I look forward to most," he said, "a return to Rivershall or the hour when the gang will be unmasked. I leave all in your hands, my dear Mr. Clifford, absolutely all. Remember that I am at your disposal, and Lillian too."

"Would you were in better and wiser hands, sir," he said. "This is a complicated tangle for one set of brains. There are more disjointed pieces than you imagine."

"I can believe it," said the old man, passing his hand across his brow. "I am quite at a loss to conjecture who this man you call Melchior can be. Of course it is clear that his motive was the possession of Rivershall, which he would obtain by a marriage with that infamous woman, who is no doubt his accomplice."

"I would rather say his dupe," said Clarence, with an involuntary spasm of pain.

"Well, well," said Sir Ralph, commencing to pace the room, "too, dupe, what you will, they and the other deadly creature are a precious trio. Believe me, it requires no little patience to sit here and wait quietly till the mine is sprung, conscious that they are polluting the old house with their presence."

Clarence assented.

"Patience," he said, with a touch of bitterness, "is a sovereign virtue for more than one trouble."

Sir Ralph stopped and looked at him and turned away uneasily. He knew what the man who had probably saved his life and his daughter's wanted, but the old pride had sprung to life again, and, as he admitted to himself, he would rather give him half Rivershall than his only well-beloved child.

"Poor young fellow! a noble young fellow, but he is an adventurer. I cannot, nor will others, ever forget that," he thought, and turned to the window.

At that moment Lillian entered, with a beautiful crimson flush of joy, which faded suddenly and left her pale as she noted the careworn look which all Clarence's art could not hide from her loving eyes.

He rose and took the warm little hand she held out to him and bowed over it. His heart was too full to utter a word.

"Come, my dear Lily," said Sir Ralph, "we would not do more to infringe upon your rights than take one cup of coffee; you must complete the ministrations."

She kissed him with a suppressed sigh and took her seat at the head of the table; then, before she asked a question, took Clarence's cup of half-cold coffee from him and poured him out a fresh supply.

He could not meet her eye, and commenced talking rapidly to Sir Ralph.

Lillian, perceiving his evident embarrassment, and fearful that something dreadful had occurred and that they were keeping it from her, set down her cup and put the question to Clarence:

"What has happened? Tell me all, please."

Clarence, glancing at Sir Ralph and getting his acquiescence by a nod, then told her of the approaching climax, the meditated wedding.

Lillian, as well she might be, was astounded.

"Oh!" she said, aghast. "You will never be able to prevent it. One pair of hands, powerful as they may be, and one brain, clever as it is, cannot do it. Oh, papa, if we had some one to help him. Can't you see how ill he is?"

"You do look ill, indeed, Mr. Clifford," said Sir Ralph, earnestly. "You are sacrificing yourself to us."

"No, I am not," said Clarence; "but I should like one extra pair of hands, or eyes rather, for mine cannot be watching two places at once, and that is what I almost require them to do."

Lillian lent her chin upon her hand and looked thoughtfully at the table.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Sir Ralph, who, with excusable restlessness, had risen and was pacing to and fro again.

"I was going over all our friends, papa, to find one who could serve us in this pass, but I know of none but Claude Ainsley."

"Mr. Ainsley!" repeated Sir Ralph. "What do you know of him?"

Lillian, with a blush and a half-glance at Clarence, whom she had told of Claude Ainsley's noble advice and all that it had saved her from, replied:

"I know that he is a friend worth having, and that I would give a thousand guineas for him now."

Poor Sir Ralph, to whom all things seemed gravely mysterious, almost frowned, and shook his head.

"I shall never get any rest again. I don't understand half that's going on round me, indeed it seems that I don't know half."

Clarence rose.

"I snatched half an hour," he said, "but I must not leave my quarry longer. For the present goodbye. You will hold yourself in readiness?"

"I am ready now this moment," said Sir Ralph, sternly, "and," as he shook hands, "don't sacrifice yourself to us, remember. I would rather they went unpunished than you should be ill."

"No fear of that," said Clarence, quietly. "Goodbye."

Lillian did not go to the door with him, for she felt that she had some reason to resent his sudden change of manner; but her loving heart looked through her eyes imploringly as he took her hand, and he went into the street again, murmuring:

"I shall lose her, but I shall never lose her love."

Hastening back to the hotel, he found that Melchior had not left his room, and, ordering breakfast in the coffee-room, that he might have an excuse for sitting there when Melchior entered, he took up the paper and waited.

Attentive to the slightest noise a commotion in the hall caused him to lay aside his paper and walk to the head of the stairs.

The hall was filled with waiters pressing forward to take the luggage and other belongings of a gentleman who had just alighted from a cab.

He was a thin, distinguished-looking man, with a face bronzed by travel.

Clarence, satisfied, returned to the coffee-room, but had the curiosity to ask a waiter the name of the gentleman who had just arrived.

"That's Mr. Ainsley, sir," said the waiter. "A great traveller; always puts up here, sir, when he comes back from Africa or America. A wonderful gentleman, been all over the world."

"Mr. Claude Ainsley?" asked Clarence, with surprise.

"Yes, Mr. Claude Ainsley," said the waiter, and the next moment Claude Ainsley himself entered. Clarence looked hard at the tanned face and stared almost rudely at the clear gray eyes.

The truth and nobleness he read there forced him to a sudden resolution.

"She knows him," he thought, "and trusted him, and so will I. I'll tell him all."

But how? That was the question.

The waiters were bustling about the room; Melchior might enter every moment, then it would be too late.

Tearing off a corner of the newspaper, he wrote on it with his pencil:

"If Mr. Claude Ainsley would hear of his friends at Rivershall and serve them in an hour of need, let him follow the writer of this into the street."

This laconic note he held in his hand and when Claude Ainsley approached him stooped and picked his own handkerchief, which he had previously dropped, from the floor, said:

"Allow me, I think you have dropped something," and extended it with the piece of paper peeping from it.

Claude Ainsley had not travelled amongst the nations of the East and witnessed their secret and mysterious manners for nothing. His eye caught the scrap of paper and his hand closed over it with an easy but quick movement.

"Thank you," he said, simply, casting a piercing glance at Clarence's handsome and ingenuous face.

Then he strolled to the window and under cover of the curtains read the note.

Clarence saw him start and glance with an air of astonishment at his hat, round which was a small crape band; Clarence understood the glance and with a smile that said, "Ah, not dead yet, but come and hear," took up his cap and sauntered from the room.

Claude Ainsley in a like manner strolled out, saying that he should return immediately, and as soon as he had reached the street and caught sight of Clarence at the corner hurried after him.

"Don't speak to me," said Clarence, looking another way as he approached, "until we get round the corner. The windows of the hotel command the spot, and we may be watched."

With a nod of acquiescence and mingled astonishment Claude walked round the corner out of sight of the hotel, and Clarence followed him.

"Now, sir," said Claude Ainsley, glancing at the note, and then fixing his eyes upon the middle-aged, grizzled-haired gentleman which Clarence, with his wig, fictitious wrinkles, and loose, easy-going, half-sealing coat, personated. "You seem to know my name, and you write of some once dear friends of mine. What is your business?"

"I know your name, and you have heard mine, Mr. Ainsley," said Clarence; "I am Clarence Clifford."

"Eh?" said Claude Ainsley, drawing back with a suspicious look. "Come, my friend, that game will not do. I am too old to be taken in with such an impudent, bare-faced imposture as that. You mention Mr. Clifford's name pretty glibly, but if you say that you are he that proves to me that I know more of the man than you who presume to personate him."

Clarence smiled, but rather sadly.

This in brighter days might have served as an excellent joke, but there are times for serious earnestness and times for joking, and of a certainty these days were not a time for the latter.

"What do you know of him?" said Clarence.

"You rogue," said Claude Ainsley. "You have not learned your lesson properly. Mr. Clarence Clifford, tutor to Miss Melville, gained a fortune and lost his life months and months ago. And now who are you?"

"Clarence Clifford," said Clarence. "Resurrections are the fashion now, Mr. Ainsley, and you may hear of more wonderful ones than mine presently. Turn with me down this street."

"Now," he said, raising his hat and the wig at the same time. "There are wrinkles and false curves to the mouth beside the wig, Mr. Ainsley, and, if they were removed, Clarence Clifford, Miss Melville's tutor, would be found beneath."

"But," said Claude Ainsley, too good a man of the world to indulge in anything more marked than a slight start, "but what of the duel, if you are the man?"

"I am the man," said Clarence, impatiently, "and I can give you better proof of it than by relating the long story of my adventures. Do you remember one bright morning giving some good and noble advice to Miss Melville in the Rivershall rosary? Well, I am Clarence Clifford you see. And now I think I can change that sigh, Mr. Ainsley, to a shout of joy. You have heard of Sir Ralph and Miss Melville's death?"

"I have," said Claude Ainsley, sorrowfully, "and would that I had been in England, they should not have breathed their last in the midst of danger."

"Amen," said Clarence, "but their last has not come yet, thank Heaven. They still live to thank you for that wish."

Claude Ainsley stared, and, as he reflected on the strange, mysterious manner, the disguise, and the still stranger statement of his companion, it flashed upon him that he must be mad!

Clarence read this in his face and despaired of convincing him of the truth of his assertions.

"You won't believe me I see," he said, with a smile, "and I am not surprised. You are just from Africa, Mr. Ainsley, or Asia possibly."

"Asia," said Claude Ainsley, "pitying the fretting spirit which impatient of his unbelief yet restrained itself. 'Asia.'"

"And you have no doubt seen wonderful things there that you fully believe yet could not explain to me. Well, this is an English marvel, and I cannot explain it because it would take me too long, and while I was spinning out the story I might lose that which I have been watching for the last seventy-two hours unremittingly."

In the midst of his sentence a thought struck him, and as Claude Ainsley was about to speak he said, eagerly:

"Did you ever see Miss Melville's hands?"

"Scores of times," replied Claude Ainsley—taking this new question as a fresh proof of the tutor's insanity.

"Have you noted her ring—the ruby one?"

"Yes," said Claude. "It was a Hindoo one of peculiar setting."

"And there it is," said Clarence, producing it. "Now I see you think that I am sane enough to be believed. No excuses, Mr. Ainsley; there is no time; this is a matter of life or death."

"And they are alive!" exclaimed Claude Ainsley, with a gesture of mingled astonishment and delight. "Yes, and here in London hidden away," said Clarence, and in a few words as possible he placed Claude Ainsley in possession of the facts—narrating with some surprise the emotion which showed itself in the sudden pallor of his cheek when Clarence mentioned Lady Melville.

"And now you want me to help you, Mr. Clifford," said Claude Ainsley. "Tell me what I am to do, and trust me to do it."

"Thank you," said Clarence, simply, shaking the hand that was held out to him. "Miss Melville looks upon you as her truest friend, and will trust you to any length. Will you undertake the charge of her and Sir Ralph while I hunt this rogues to its climax?"

"I will," said Claude Ainsley, eagerly; "give me their address."

Clarence wrote it down rapidly.

"And now for you; what is your next move?" he asked.

"To track my game while in London, and follow him to Rivershall. When he starts, which he will do so doubt to-day, I will send word by special messenger—give me the ring back, please," he put in, parenthetically, eyeing it on Claude's finger jealously. "I will send this ring as a proof of the genuineness of the message—"

"Is that necessary?" said Claude.

"Every precaution that presents itself to the human mind is necessary in attempting to foil those we have to deal with," replied Clarence, earnestly. "You don't know the prime mover in this, and I, alas, to my cost, do! To proceed, I will send word immediately he starts for Rivershall, and I shall expect you to bring Sir Ralph and Miss Melville post haste to the small inn at the cross roads, not the 'Rivershall Arms,' for that is the place of call for everybody, and is not to be trusted. I know the landlady of the 'Ploughman,' and she can be trusted. Be there in as short a time after you have received my notice as possible, and I think I can manage the rest."

"All right," said Claude Ainsley. "And now we had better get back to the hotel."

"You had, but not I," said Clarence. "It would be risking too much to enter the room where he is sitting with the light full upon my face; where you found me in the coffee room was in the shadow, with the additional shade of a newspaper. No, we must say good-bye for the present, I think."

"Good-bye!" said Claude Ainsley, looking at him earnestly, and keeping his hot, feverish hand for a moment in his own brown palm. "I am afraid you are spending your strength rather lavishly in this matter, Mr. Clifford."

"No," said Clifford, curtly, turning his head aside.

"May I venture to hope that you will gain your great and sweet reward?" said Claude Ainsley, gently and significantly.

At this manly touch of sympathy from the man who had read the secret of his love for Lillian in the clasp of his hand Clarence turned pale.

"No," he said, hoarsely, "I am like the fool in the fable, Mr. Ainsley; I am sitting on the wrong side of the branch which I am sawing. When it falls I shall fall with it."

Then, before Claude Ainsley could reply, he turned and walked hurriedly away.

(To be continued.)

THE civic authorities of Edinburgh presented Baroness Burdett Coutts with a "Burgess Ticket" in an ornate silver case. The presentation took place in the Music Hall. The provost, magistrates, and town council thereafter dined with the noble and philanthropic lady, the youngest burgess, in the Palace Hotel, Prince's Street.

SOME of the gold which we have been so sedulously exporting to Germany for the last three years is at length coming back in the shape of German coin. In size, appearance, and in weight, they almost exactly resemble sovereigns and half-sovereigns, but their actual value falls short of our gold currency by nearly fourpence in the pound.

THE Archduchess Gisela, who, as will be remembered, was married to Prince Leopold of Bavaria last year, has given birth to a princess, and the news has been received with great rejoicing at Vienna. The grandfather of the child, the Emperor Francis Joseph, is only 44 years old, the grandmother 37, and the great-grandfather (Archduke Francis Charles) 72.

A TEMPORARY is informed that the clerks at the Admiralty have had 100*l.* per annum added to

their pay—viz., from 300*l.* to 400*l.*, and that, instead of increments of 10*l.* a year after thirteen years' service, their salaries are to be augmented by 20*l.* per annum.

THIRTY THOUSAND MILES ON A BICYCLE.—"Three years back I purchased a tension bicycle; and, living in Croydon, and having an office in London, I have ridden almost daily, winter and summer, in all weathers, to and fro, a distance of 20 miles, besides taking excursions over a 100 miles in a day, and trips round the coast, which have extended over a week. I have kept an account of the number of miles traversed, and the total amounts to 30,000 miles in three years. I have, therefore, travelled on this bicycle a distance greater than the circumference of the earth. I have never met with an accident or fall of any moment, and my bicycle is in sufficient order to carry me as far again. I may just mention, counting my travelling at a penny per mile, it amounts to 125*l.*; to say nothing about going where I wish. I also enjoy better health than I did before taking to the bicycle."

—H. W.

WOMAN AND WINE.

Por! went the gay cork flying,
Sparkled the bright champagne;
By the light of a day that was dying,
He filled up their goblets again.
Let the last, best toast be woman,
"Woman, dear woman," said he;
"Empty your glass, my darling,
When you drink to your sex with me."
But she caught his strong brown fingers,
And held them tight as in fear,
And through the gathering twilight
Her fond voice fell on his ear.
"Nay, ere you drink, I implore you,
By all that you hold divine,
Pledge a woman in tear-drops,
Rather by far than in wine."
"By the woes of the drunkard's mother,
By his children who beg for bread,
By the fate of her whose beloved one
Looks on the wine when 'tis red;
By the kisses changed to curses,
By tears more bitter than brine,
By many a fond heart broken,
Pledge no woman in wine."
"What has wine brought to woman?
Nothing but tears and pain,
It has torn from her arms her lover
And proven her prayers in vain;
And her household gods, all shattered,
Lie tangled up in the vine;
Oh! I prithe, pledge no woman
In the curse of so many, Wine."

M. H. D.

NEW HOUSES.

THE coincidence of a man's moving into a new house and dying soon after has frequently been a subject of remark, and there is an avoidable cause—the house is moved into before the walls and plaster and the wood are sufficiently dried. Sometimes the cause of death is the poisonous character of the water conveyed through new lead pipes. No water for drinking or cooking purposes should be used in a building supplied with new lead pipes, in whole or in part, for at least one month after the water has been used daily; this gives time for a protecting coating to form on the inner surface of the pipes, when their chemical change from contact with water generally ceases.

But the damp materials of the house have the most decided effect, especially on persons over fifty years old, or of frail constitutions, whereas if the person were in the full vigour of life and health not even an inconvenience would be experienced.

In building a new house, or on going to live in another locality, where the water supply is not far from the house, it should be ascertained with the utmost certainty that the spring or well is higher than the barn yards, etc. Insidious and fatal forms of decline and typhoid very often result from persons drinking water which is drained from the localities named.

The safest plan, and the only safe plan for furnishing dwellings with the most healthful and unobjectionable water, is to have a water-tight cistern, and let the water from the roof of the house or barn, or other outhouses be conveyed into it through a box of sand several yards long, this box to rest on a board or cemented bottom and sides, so that no outside water could get into it.

WOMEN DENTISTS IN EGYPT.—Dr. Edward Warren writes from Cairo, in Egypt, to a friend that there is "a good opportunity for women dentists in Egypt."

as the women are forbidden to consult with men." There are three or four Englishwomen practicing dentistry in Cairo already, according to Dr. Warren's letter. In all these eastern countries there seems to be a wide field of usefulness and profit for woman doctors and dentists.

THE ASHANTEES.

THE social institutions of Ashantee bear a strong resemblance to those of other parts of Africa. Slavery holds a prominent position amongst them. Slaves are made in a variety of ways. Prisoners of war, if not executed, become slaves. Misconduct and debt are sources of slavery. But from these causes many are slaves only for a time. A man may purge himself from his misconduct, or free himself from debt, and then he is no longer a slave. But with the Ashantees there is a system of pawning of liberty. For money or merchandise a man may pawn his wife and children, or himself. And these pawns are virtually slaves until they are redeemed. But the greater number of slaves have been brought from the interior by the Mahomedan slave-merchants. Tribe wars with tribe, and the captives are sold to the merchants; or the merchants themselves make war for the purpose of getting slaves. At Ashantee, where the very streets of Coomassie are said to be impregnated with gold, a ready market is found for slaves. It is the fashion with the great men of the tribe to multiply slaves, so that it is not uncommon for one man to own more than a thousand. But slavery with them is not so degrading as with civilized people. Sometimes it is merely nominal; and for the most part the slaves are regarded as dependents. In no case does slavery bear the opprobrium amongst the Africans that it does in other parts of the world. There are African masters who are cruel; but the instances are rare, and cruelty is restrained by the dread of witchcraft, which keeps the king in check.

Polygamy is a popular institution with the Ashantees. As a man is raised in the scale of Ashantee society so does the number of his wives increase. The gulf which separates the least from the greatest may be estimated by the fact that whereas one wife is permitted to a slave the king may have three thousand three hundred and thirty-three. Beyond that number the custom of the country does not permit him to go. This limitation, wide though it be, is an improvement upon the custom of some tribes that are more in favour with us. Amongst the Makololo, for instance, the people whom Livingstone has made popular, every woman of the tribe, be she married or single, must be the wife of the chief, if so the chief will; and when the daughter of Sebitane succeeded her father as the supreme personage of the tribe she naturally concluded that she was entitled to claim every man for her husband. The difficulties that were created by this claim ultimately led her to resign the chieftainship to her brother. Polygamy being popular the demand for women by this one kingdom of Ashantee has led to widespread misery. Tribe wages war with tribe, and the victors carry off the women and female children for the Ashantee market. In some parts of Africa whole districts are depopulated by wars instigated by the slave-dealers for the sole purpose of getting women for the inland trade.

The regulations which exist with reference to the wives of the King of Ashantee are as strict as those which relate to the wives of the Sultan of Turkey. Like the King of Dahomi, the Ashantee monarch is in a certain sense a sacred personage, and this sanctity invests the women who are united to him in marriage. There is a seraglio at Coomassie. An entire locality is devoted to the wives of the king, who are strictly secluded from the rest of the population. Sometimes they are permitted to visit the other parts of the town; but on such occasions the people are warned to absent themselves, for to look upon the wives of the king is considered to be an offence which cannot be pardoned. Should there be any who have not been able to profit by this warning, as the queenly procession approaches they must fall flat on the ground and bury their faces in the earth until the ladies have passed by. At some state ceremonials, however, a certain number of the king's wives are permitted to attend.

THE rinderpest is now stamped out in Prussia. The rigid and thorough military surveillance established by the German authorities in the matter could not fail in suppressing the disease.

HOSPITAL SUNDAY IN AUSTRALIA.—Hospital Sunday was so successful in Australia on its first trial that the institution is sure to become as firmly established there as it is now here. At Melbourne 4,000*l.* was collected, while the country districts were not behindhand in the good work. A Melbourne paper calculates that while the collections in England averaged 1*l.* 1*s.* for each hundred of the population, they may in the colony be put down as 2*l.* per hundred.



[THE AMBASSADOR.]

THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XIV.

It oft falls out

To have what we would have we speak not
what we mean. *Shakespeare.*

ONE fair morning, a few days after the departure of Count Alfrasco from the city of Naples, a man, mounted on a mule, and garbed like a begging friar, rode into the great square of that city called the Largo del Mercato.

At one end of the square, and erected so as to form a great and lofty platform against one of the houses there, was a newly built scaffold.

Several workmen were busy in giving the final completeness to this scaffold, which extended across the narrow street from the second storey windows of the house, and reached even a few feet over the fence at that angle of the square.

The friar, hooded and cowed, checked his mule near this scaffold, and said to one of the workmen:

"What means this scaffold, my son?"

"Thou must have ridden with thy ears stopped close, father," replied the workman, "if thou hast yet to be told why this work is being done! Why, there is to be a quadruple execution to be done on this same scaffold at noon of to-morrow."

"A quadruple execution!"

"Ay, father; four heads are to be cut off."

"Four!"

"Four. The head of Colonna di Caraccioli, the head of a young woman called Vittoria di Sicardoli, the head of her father, Cosmo the Forester, and the head of her mother, old Cosmo's wife."

"Ah!"

And that "ah!" was all the hitherto inquisitive friar said in recognition of an announcement which the burly and honest carpenter expected would be hailed with many an exclamation of wonder, if not of horror.

While the friar was asking the few and brief questions just quoted another workman, clean-shaven, one eye covered with a patch, his face much hidden by a large leathern hat, and in a shabby and much-tattered garb, so large and loose as to greatly increase even his comely but awkward appearance, had continued to saw furiously on a stout timber, though his only visible eye was bent upon the gowned form of the friar.

This ragged carpenter, whom for the present we will call Gita, after hearing the voice of the friar, had said to himself:

"It is he! I knew he would come!"

The conversation having ended with the "ah!" of

the friar, and the burly old chief carpenter having become sulkily silent at not having excited the wonder and horror of the friar, the ragged and corpulent carpenter advanced a little toward the friar, at the same time striking the blade of his saw with something that looked like a silver-headed hammer with a small, stem-like handle.

The noise made by the rapid tapping of this hammer on the sonorous steel of the saw was a clashing, a clanging, and a rattling, all at once—a shrill, sharp, metallic, rattling sound, heard instantly by all the workmen under, upon, and around the great scaffold.

Three of the workmen, at three different points of the upper part of the scaffold, instantly left their work and hurried from the square.

At the same time two who were at work below the scaffold departed in the same manner.

The sound made by Gita was an important signal, well understood by these five workmen.

As all left their tools and upper garments their comrades supposed they had gone to slake their thirst at one of the many wine saloons in the vicinity of the Largo del Mercato, and made no remark.

The friar had not observed the signal, but had continued to peer from his cowl at the scaffold.

But the sound irritated the burly chief carpenter, and, turning upon the ragged workman, he said:

"Cease thy clamour, Gita—I think so thou gavest me thy name yester-even, when, hard pressed for hands, I did accept thy offer of service."

"Thou wert glad to take me and those I found," replied Gita. "Many of thy regular hands refused to aid in building a scaffold for the execution of Colonna the Just."

"I admit that—but I hired thee to work and not to make a noise like that. Ho! is that a baby's silver rattle with which thou didst beat thy saw, Gita?"

"It is a baby's rattle, Master Culpetto," replied Gita, holding up that which we have just said looked like a small silver hammer.

He held it in such a manner that the eyes of the friar must fall upon it.

In fact, Gita held the toy nearer to the friar than to Culpetto.

"I found it near the Castle of Zapponetto," he added, as soon as he saw that he had attracted the eyes of the friar.

"Ha!" ejaculated the friar, under his cowl, and at the same instant his mule almost roared under a sudden pressure which his rider involuntarily gave upon the bit.

"Now I know it is he!" muttered the ragged carpenter. "Master," he added to Culpetto, who was a little deaf, "some one is calling thee."

"Where?"

"On the upper part of the scaffold."

"I hear no one calling me, Gita."

"I do, master."

"Oh! thy ears are better than mine!"

"Ay, or those of Alfrasco Zapponetto, which Sicardo cut off. But some one is calling thee, master."

"Then I will mount the ladder and see what is wanted. Ah! now I hear!" said Culpetto, mounting the ladder which there led from the ground to the platform of the scaffold.

And in truth some one on the platform was at that moment shouting:

"Master Culpetto! Ho! Master Culpetto!"

He who thus shouted was at the rear of the scaffold platform. A moment before, when Gita had said, "Master, some one is calling thee," this person who was now shouting the name of the chief carpenter was looking down at Gita from the front edge of the platform.

It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader that this person, like all of the five who had retired so suddenly, was a confederate of Gita's.

No sooner had Culpetto disappeared over the platform than Gita fixed his one eye on the scarcely visible eyes of the friar, and said:

"Father, I would I could see Count Alfrasco of Zapponetto. I have a message for him."

"Deliver thy message to me, my son, and I will deliver it to him, though I love him not," said the friar, in a muffled voice.

"Is Count Alfrasco in Naples?" asked Gita.

"He would not dare show himself in Naples, as the queen hath proclaimed him banished from the capital for a year."

"Yet Signorina Ergivetta told me I might find him in Naples."

"Ha! Is she not dead?" asked the friar.

"Perhaps, by this time. But she was living when I saw her five days ago. I have this note in her handwriting for the count—if I could find him."

"Thou canst give the note to me, as I know where the count may be found."

"Nay, father. Signorina Ergivetta made me swear to give her note into the hands of no other than the count."

"I am he," said the man on the mule.

"Then here is the note."

The note ran thus:

"Trust the bearer, my lord. Sicardo the Brigand is in Naples, and many of his band are there also. He has heard of thy purpose to witness the execution of Lord Colonna and the others, and means to slay thee. Manfredi is dead, but ere he died he fell into

the hands of Sicardo and made a full confession of all he knew: so that the brigand knows in what disguise thou art to visit Naples, and that thou wilt appear as a begging friar on a sorry mule—the same disguise and mule Manfredi had placed at the inn of San Stephano, near Naples, for thy use. The brigand, if not in Naples before thee, will be there on the day of execution. In token that I am serving thee well, my dearest lord, I send by the bearer of this note the silver rattle of our darling babe. Change thy disguise, or instantly fly from Naples.

"Thy ever fond and faithful ERGIVETTA."

"Let me see the toy," said the count, for the pretended friar was he.

Gita gave him the rattle, and the count instantly recognized it.

"Where may I change my disguise, my friend?" he asked, as he cast a wary glance over all the square.

The square would have been thronged with people but for a force of soldiery and police which had just arrived, and was ordering the curious mob to keep at a good distance.

"Better leave the city this instant, my lord," whispered Gita, shaking his head, "for though Sicardo may still be miles away he will be here on the morrow."

"What knowest thou of Sicardo?"

"I could tell thee much of him had we time. But I must to my work, and thou art in peril. Take my advice, my lord, and hurry from the city or thou wilt fall by the dagger of the terrible brigand."

"Nay, I have sworn to witness the feat which Black Sforza is to perform on this scaffold," replied the daring count. "Canst obtain for me a change of disguise?"

"Fly, my lord—for so the signorina urged me to urge thee," said Gita, doggedly. "Even if thou dost evade the keen vengeance of the brigand thou mayest be detected by the spies of the queen. All of the Caraccioli name are forbidden to remain in Naples from yesterday morn till after to-morrow under penalty of death if caught or seen during that time within five miles of the city."

"Ay, I read a copy of that order on yonder banner-staff. Thou wilt not betray me, I am assured, for doubtless the signorina has paid thee well and promised thee more!" said the count, who added, in thought: "I wonder that she lives—though doubtless she did not drink the potion I prepared for her."

"I am well paid, my lord. Better than if the royal reward offered for the head of Sicardo were doubled and in my hand."

"So! then the signorina must have given thee much of her jewellery for this service," said the count, suspiciously.

"This and more, my lord," replied Gita, for an instant showing a necklace of splendid diamonds, and instantly hiding it again in the bosom of his ragged doublet.

"Ha! the necklace old Adriano di Vampi gave to Ergivetta as a gift at my sham marriage with her!" thought the count, angrily. "The diamonds are worth twenty thousand ducats! I must get them back from this fellow by hook or crook."

"Fly, my lord," again whispered Gita. "I was to return the necklace if I failed to warn thee. I have warned thee."

"Stay! I will reward thee well, my friend, if thou wilt aid me to change my disguise."

"Thou wilt not fly?"

"Nay."

"Then I wash my hands of the matter."

"Nay—aid me to procure a disguise and I will reward thee well. Thou must have some place of abode near?"

"I have but just arrived in Naples, my lord; I came in yesterday. I am a wandering workman. Yet I have hired a room from which I can witness the execution."

"Thou hast! Then cannot I abide in good concealment there, and so witness the execution also?" demanded the count, eagerly.

"There are six or seven of us, my lord—all wandering workmen—here, seeking employment—"

"Ha! Gita, to thy work!" here cried Culpetto, showing his burly form on the edge of the platform above. "Wilt thou dally and gossip all day with the friar? To thy work, for five of thy comrades have wandered off—the fiend take them!"

"Ho! here, Master Culpetto!" cried the same person who had before withdrawn the attention of the master carpenter. "Here! the platform is unsafe on this side."

Culpetto uttered an imprecation and hurried away. "There are five or six of us, my lord," resumed Gita, "all eager to see the great execution, and they share the room with me. I hath two windows—it is that," he added, pointing with his saw. "The same from which 'tis said the page of Sicardo shot the arrows—but I will not speak of that—and I beg thy pardon for having spoken of it at all."

"No matter, my honest friend. The room is lofty and commands a good view of the scaffold?"

"It doth, and I doubt not that my comrades have already stolen away to take care that no one else secures the room of old Rene Salvatore. We made Culpetto pay us in advance for our work, and so have the old fellow on the hip."

"Canst thou not give me a place among thy comrades, my friend?"

"They are dull, rude fellows, and not fit company for thy lordship. Nay, if they do once suspect that thou art a Caraccioli they may denounce thee to the agent of the police. Better leave the city, my lord."

"There is no reward offered to any one that shall point out a Caraccioli to the police."

"True—I had forgotten that."

"And if thy comrades suspect me as a Caraccioli I have gold near at hand to pay them for silence."

"They would never suspect thee in that disguise. But I must leave my work if I go with thee."

"Thou canst afterwards make the matter square with Culpetto. I will give thee money to repay him all he may lose and more."

"Thou wilt not heed my warning, nor that of Signorina Ergivetta?"

"Nay, nor shalt thou persuade me," replied the count.

"Then have thy wish, though I would thou hadst left the city the instant after thou hadst read the note," said Gita. "Turn thy mule loose, and follow me."

Gita instantly left the vicinity of the scaffold, and was closely followed by the count.

The mule, abandoned, was soon led away by some of those in the square, and Signor Culpetto did not discover the withdrawal of Gita and the pretended friar until both had disappeared from the square.

Then Culpetto vociferated hoarsely, and hurried to another part of the scaffold only to find that the last of the seven roving workmen he had hired the day before, and been forced to pay in advance, had taken himself away.

"I will keep all their tools!" roared Signor Culpetto.

And he did. No one ever claimed them!

CHAPTER XXVI.

No word like pardon for kings' mouths so meet.

Shakespeare.

On the night of the day that saw the count and Gita leave the Largo del Mercato a man of noble and almost royal presence, clad in most costly and imposing garb, presented himself before the grand-chamberlain of the royal palace, and asked for a private audience with the queen.

"It is far past the hour, noble signor," said the chamberlain, much struck by the lofty air of the stranger and his splendid attire, "and we know thee not!"

"The queen hath, I know, given orders that any one who can tell her majesty where to find the Valdalla Crown shall be admitted to the royal presence at any hour," replied the stranger. "Pray, sir chamberlain, give at least this note to the queen."

The chamberlain departed with the sealed note given to him. He soon returned and said:

"Her majesty is just through conferring with a worthy and much-honoured priest of Atrani, a Father Anselmo, who hath arrived from Rome within an hour or two. Her majesty will see thee, signor."

A few minutes after the stranger stood in the royal presence.

"We have received thy note, sir stranger," said the queen, fixing her eyes upon the stately personage before her. "Thy name?"

"Tancred di Chiaramonti, Count del Esso, and special and secret ambassador from His Majesty Alfonso V. of Sicily and Aragon to Her Majesty Joanna II., Queen of Naples," replied the stranger, kneeling on one knee, and presenting a package to the queen. She opened it hastily, and then uttered a cry of delight.

The Valdalla Crown was at last in her possession!

"See!" she exclaimed, and holding aloft the golden band toward the only person in the audience chamber, except Count Tancred and herself—this person an aged priest of most benevolent and winning features. "See, Father Anselmo! The Valdalla Crown! Mine, mine at last!" and with another cry of delight she placed the crown so long worn by Vittoria upon her brows.

The priest smiled and bowed, but his eyes remained fixed upon Count Tancred.

"Now, and ere I read these dispatches from our royal cousin of Aragon and Sicily," said the overjoyed queen, as she glanced at a packet of papers which were in the package from which she had taken the crown, "tell me—ha! what didst thou call thyself?"

"Tancred di Chiaramonti, Count del Esso—"

"What! How! The same name as that of the dead son of Leonato di Chiaramonti!"

"I am that son, thy majesty," replied Count Tancred, gravely, and rising to his full and lofty stature. "The Valdalla Crown was placed in my hands by Sicardo the Brigand."

"By Sicardo the Brigand?"

"By Rizzio di Sicardo, thy majesty, and he claims, through me, his nearest friend, all that thy majesty hath proclaimed shall be granted to him who shall deliver to thee that crown."

"Now, by the mass!" cried the queen, "it shall never be said that Joanna hath not kept her proclaimed promise to the very letter, Count del Esso. See, I have been so confident that this longed-for crown would be found and delivered to me that I have had drawn up a royal warrant, in which I embodied all that is promised in my proclamation. Here—the pen!—see! I write here the name of Rizzio di Sicardo!—so—and here I place my sign manual—so! And the royal seal is already appended! There, receive the parchment and give it to the brigand with a wish that henceforth he may be an honest man."

Count Tancred received the parchment, glanced over it gravely and said:

"And now must I proffer to thy grace for this pardoned man, to whom thy majesty has also by this warrant granted the title of count, and an annual income of a thousand ducats during his life, the favour he hath desired me to ask of thy generous majesty."

"We listen," replied the queen, her curiosity aroused.

"His life and pardon of Cosmo di Sicardo, and of his wife and daughter, and of Colonna di Caraccioli."

The queen was a moment speechless with surprise and sudden rage.

The priest said, gravely:

"Count Tancred, tell Rizzio di Sicardo that Joanna of Naples hath already pardoned Cosmo and his wife, and may pardon Vittoria."

"But by the mass, Father Anselmo," exclaimed the queen, striking her table with her fist, "as was her habit when in a great rage, 'I will not pardon Colonna di Caraccioli!'"

"Pray calm thyself, my royal daughter," said the noble-hearted priest. "Know, Count Tancred, that we are aware that Cosmo is thy father, the unfortunate Duke Leonato del Arnato. I knew not that my esteemed friend, Cosmo the Forester, was Duke Leonato until after I had begun to implore her majesty to spare his life, and those of his wife and daughter. Then the queen revealed to me that it was impossible for her to pardon Cosmo, as he was Leonato di Chiaramonti, a man under the ban of the Holy Church. Then gave I to the queen this parchment, which is a complete removal of the sentence of the Church, for of late it hath become known to His Holiness that Duke Leonato was innocent of the death of Prince del Alberto; and in this wise:

"Five years ago died a man who confessed on his death bed that he was one of several who had tended on the wounded man in the palace of Gianni di Caraccioli; that the prince was, in truth, accidentally wounded by the duke, but would not have died had he had proper care in the palace of Ser Gianni. This confession was made to a friend of mine, and the latter informed me. From the same source I gained the names of several others who were at that time in the service of Ser Gianni; and for years I have followed this matter up, and a few months ago, I went to Rome with the information I had so slowly obtained, for, I know not why, I had a belief that Duke Leonato still lived. I had never suspected that Cosmo was he; for though the duke is a kinsman of mine, I had never seen him while he was known as Leonato di Chiaramonti. I obtained from His Holiness the removal of the ban and full restoration to his former good name, so far as the power of our Holy Church can reach. This I placed before the queen an hour since, when she told me who Cosmo was. He and his noble wife are both fully exonerated from the foul charge placed upon them by Ser Gianni. The queen hath also pardoned them as sovereign of this kingdom."

"And I have for them a full pardon from Alfonso V. of Aragon and Sicily," said Count Tancred, "and his royal proclamation by which they are restored to their former rank and possessions in Sicily. For it is known to the king that his sister and brother-in-law, my unfortunate parents, were the innocent victims of the malice of their enemies, the greatest of whom was and is Gianni di Caraccioli."

The queen had heard but never believed that he who was called Sicardo the Brigand was the son of Cosmo; or at once, on hearing the name of her stately visitor, she would have suspected—as doubtless the intelligent reader has—that Count Tancred was the famous brigand.

Nor could she conceive a suspicion that this kingly looking ambassador, with his grave, haughty, and smooth-shaven face, was that great and formidable brigand Sicardo, to whom his enemies and detractors

had, by false report, given a ferocious and hugely bearded barbarian visage.

"Gianni di Caraccioli," continued Count Tancred, "caused the rearrest of my father upon that false charge—the murder of Borrelli—and then added the charge that Cosmo was Duke Leonardo."

"True, Count Tancred," said the queen. "I know not how the Grand Constable discovered that Cosmo was the unfortunate duke. I know that I suspect Alfrasco told Ser Gianni, after it was established in secret council and trial that Cosmo and Donna Castelletta were the outlawed and banned duke and duchess, it was impossible for me to interfere to confront the ecclesiastical sentence. But this writing from His Holiness enables me to order the instant liberation of the duke and duchess. Already I have prepared a message to be taken to Duke Leonardo by Father Anselmo."

"But thy majesty hath not empowered me to tell my honoured old friend that his daughter—" began the worthy priest.

"Speak not to me of pardon for the scheming and ambitious woman!" exclaimed the jealous queen, angrily.

"Thy majesty," said Count Tancred, with the imposing gravity so peculiar to him, "having already pardoned Duke Leonardo and the Duchess Maria Christina, hath not yet granted to the finder of the Valdalla Crown any favour."

"What! We have pardoned the brigand and granted him a title and an income!"

"By the letter of thy royal promise he is entitled to any favour he may see fit to ask of thy grace."

Let him ask any favour rather than the life of Victoria!

"He enjoined upon me most solemnly, thy grace, to ask four lives—"

"That is four favours in one!"

"But two of these lives are already safe," said Count Tancred, firmly, "and at least one of the other two as due to the finder of the Valdalla Crown. But had Suardo bade me ask a thousand deaths, thy grace, would the granting of his request be a thousand favours? Nay, it is the act, though it comprehend the saving of a thousand separate lives, that makes the single favour."

"What are the lives of any of the four to Suardo?" demanded the queen, in a heat. "Who is he, that he, a brigand, should ask mercy for any of the four?"

"Thy majesty will grant me the favour of telling thee how Suardo found the Valdalla Crown?"

"Certainly, Count Tancred, if thou wilt afterward tell me why the bold brigand has sent this strange request to us."

"First permit me," said Father Anselmo, "to take to my old friend Cosmo—for to me he will ever be Cosmo—thy message which is to carry joy to his heart."

"Let me speak apart with thee, father," replied the queen.

On this hint Count Tancred withdrew into an ante-room.

(To be continued.)

Mrs. FRANCES M. BURLING, who danced with Washington, and flirted with Lafayette, Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton, and other great men of Revolutionary days, died recently, at Milford, Pennsylvania, aged 96. She was a belle in New York society nearly 80 years ago.

M. BLONDIN has not been fortunate in his visit to Calcutta. On the day previous to the performance part of his pavilion fell down, the supports being insufficient, and he was unable to fulfil his engagement. He is stated to be ready to walk across the Hooghly, if the necessary arrangements could be made.

The year 1873 was the first in which the imports of foreign and colonial merchandise into the United Kingdom exceeded the value of 1,000,000,000 a day. The total is stated at 370,880,742. The exports of British and Irish produce and manufactures averaged nearly 700,000,000 a day, the total being 255,073,386.

HIRING ARTICLES IN PARIS.—Everything, it is said, may be hired in Paris, from swaddling-clothes to winding-sheets. Flowers, fruit, china, laces, and jewellery are duly let out by very respectable people, who wish to astonish their neighbours, and not a little themselves. Aquariums, well stocked, are among the recent novelties lent for the day or the week, with facilities for payment if retained, like pianos and wearing apparel. The very latest wants supplied are cockatoos, love-birds, and various members of the feline family.

"DUFFY" REDEYIVUS.—A very offensive mode of cross-examination has recently come into fashion in the criminal courts. A witness, already on his oath, gives certain evidence; he is immediately asked whether he swears that, and answers that he does.

But this by no means satisfies the cross-examining barrister. "You really mean to swear that," etc., "Remember you are on your oath," and similar suggestions that the witness is perjuring himself, are reiterated in order to induce the jury to believe his evidence untrustworthy. This is hardly fair to one who may be endeavouring to speak the truth, while a hard sweeper will be by no means checked by such unauthoritative additions to the oath previously administered to him. This custom is singularly offensive to those who have proper regard for an oath's sanctity, and ridiculously inoperative in the case of those who are not so influenced.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

"THERE is my cousin Edwina," said my friend, Ralph Hay. "Edwina! Edwina!"

She turned her face as he called to her, and looked at us. I had never seen any one like her before, nor had I ever heard her name. Both were unique, both I thought beautiful. Whether any one is really so it is often hard to determine. That every eye makes its own beauty is a truth as well as a proverb.

She suited me, that small, dark, crimson-lipped creature, as lithe as a gazelle and almost as shy. I saw in the glance she gave us that she hesitated between advancing and running away when she heard herself called. The conventionalities got the better of her bashfulness and she turned and came toward us. "Miss Earle," said Ralph Hay, "Mr. Smith. John, this is Cousin Edwina."

She bowed, so did I, and so my love came into my life. It was the supreme moment of my existence, though I was not conscious of it then. I knew that I had met a girl I liked, that the day was very bright, and the pleasant country place pleasanter than it had ever seemed before. I can see it now—the long green lane that ended in a group of tall, dark pollards, the cottage roof beyond, the white spire in the distance, over all a sweet, pink-tinted, sunset sky, and near by the tiny tinkle of the running stream, the girl, in her white dress, with a cluster of scarlet flowers in her small hand, walking between us.

I had come to Ferndale on a visit. Such holiday as my business permitted me I should spend there, and it was on my way from the railway station to my friend's house that I met Edwina. She was his cousin, as he had said, and she helped to care for the children, of whom there were a half-dozen. She could churn and milk and bake, and she had read all Scott's novels, and many others besides. She was bright and quick when not under the cloud of shyness, and she believed what her mother and the clergyman had taught her to believe concerning morals and theology.

She was not a brilliant woman, she was not a society belle. Most men would have rated her only a "nice little thing," I presume. Whatever she was she crept into my heart somehow and stayed there. One day I knew that I loved her, and that if she did not love me I should be very unhappy.

We had gone out upon the river for water-lilies. There was a little quiet nook, quite overarched by tree branches, where they grew in profusion. I rowed the boat. She drew the great white floating beauties toward her by their long stems, and, breaking them off, laid them in the basket she had brought. There was no other boat on the river, there was no one on the shore. A little way farther on lay the shadow of a covered bridge, and farther still the ruins of a mill; but no one crossed the bridge, and the mill was deserted. We never had been so entirely alone before.

The long lily-stems had entangled my oars. I drew them out and laid them in the boat. We only drifted slowly now. Everything was very still. A sense of peace such as I had never felt before settled down upon me. Her hand, so white, and small, and fine, rested on the boat's edge. To save my life I could not have resisted the impulse I had to touch it. One moment I laid my palm upon it; the next I held it fast and close. She did not take it away. Her shy eyes sought the water, but the hand remained in mine. And so we sat quite silent until the sun set. Then I kissed her. We rowed back to our starting-point in the twilight. The children were on the grass watching for us, and I had no chance of speaking to her alone, that night; but I felt that she was mine. To any but a heartless flirt acts are as binding as words, and a love-kiss is a vow not lightly to be broken.

I went up to my room a happy man. I lost myself in slumber, only to dream of Edwina; and I remember that in my fancy we were walking hand in hand in some pleasant place where flowers grew, and birds sang, and waters rippled, when a rough hand shook me by the shoulder, and a voice at my ear cried: "John! I say, old fellow, wake up. Here's a telegram. Steady, now. I'm afraid it's bad news."

At these words I arose from my bed with a sudden

chill of terror upon me, snatched the paper from my friend's hand and read the brief contents.

They brought bad news indeed. My beloved father lay at death's door, and I was bidden to hasten if I would see him alive.

I looked at my friend with eyes from which I could not banish the sudden flood of tears. He had read the message also, and only touched me on the shoulder. He was a big, kindly, well-meaning fellow, who generally bungled over everything, and I had liked him very much ever since those school days when he was always getting me into difficulties.

"Don't take it too hard, John," he said. "While there's life there's hope. Just arrange your bag, and I'll harness the horse, and we'll get to the station in time for the one o'clock train."

After that we said very little more, though even in my agitation I could not forget as I drove away that a light shone in the window of Edwina's room. I think the messenger had awakened her, and that, unseen by me, she watched my departure.

My father died before I reached home, and our house was a house of mourning for many days. Such grief banishes all lighter thought, and many cares and anxieties followed our loss.

At last, however, I became calm enough to write to Edwina. Our understood engagement was not enough. I offered myself to her in plain and earnest terms. I had no doubt as to the answer. Her kiss had given me assurance of her love.

I despatched the letter, and waited for a reply. It came soon, but not in the regular way.

One morning my friend Ralph Hay walked into my office, fresh from his early journey by the train. He spoke to me bluntly but kindly of my loss; gave me some of those bits of Scriptural comfort which most good people produce on such occasions; and as he rose to depart tossed me a little note.

"From a lady," he said, and nodded, and went away chuckling.

I put the note upon the desk before me, and looked at it tenderly. Her first letter—hers! It was a neat little hand. "John Smith, Esq.," was prettily flourished. The paper was fine, the monogram elegant.

"It looks like a love-letter," I said, and cut it daintily open, and drew out the folded paper.

"How would it begin?" I asked myself.

It began thus:

"MR. SMITH.—Dear Sir: I have but just received your proposal. Doubtless I ought to be flattered at being chosen where so many have, of course, offered themselves; but really the position you proffer has no charms for me. I am useful here and happy in my duties, and I hasten to decline, with many thanks."

"I trust we shall be just as friendly notwithstanding, and that next time you come to Ferndale you will bring your wife to see me."

"Very truly, EDWINA EARLE."

I read that letter three times before I could believe in it. It was the strangest answer that man ever received to a passionate declaration of love. I had never boasted of my conquests. Why should she flout me with them? I had told her that she was the only woman I had ever loved or ever should love. She had bidden me "bring my wife to see her" next time I came.

There is very little to be said sometimes about one's most powerful feelings. I suffered terribly. I was at once grieved and angry, astonished and dismayed. My manner was altered. I hardly knew my own face in the glass. I did not feel like myself. It was as though some other soul wore in my body.

After a while that longing for change of scene which some temperaments always experience after great trouble possessed me and an opportunity soon offered itself. The firm with which I was connected needed a business man in Paris. I applied for the position and obtained it.

Hopeless love is a thing to mock at, I believe. No one respects or even pities one who suffers from it. Why, then, should I tell of the long, weary years through which I lived, doing my daily work, gaining a reputation as a business man—eating, drinking, and sleeping like any one else, yet always with that heavy burden at my heart?

I could not forget her. I had striven in vain. I knew that all my life I must crush this silent sorrow in my breast and hide it as I might, that in old age I must sit solitary beside my hearth, because no other woman could fill the place I had destined for Edwina.

How many years were they? Enough to curdle most men of any passion; I knew it and I wondered at my own constancy. How could I love a girl whose response to a love-letter from one to whom she had tacitly promised her heart was a note like that growing yellow in my desk?

Mystery of mysteries is Love. Who shall understand it?

But one day—I knew it was my birthday, and that I was thirty years old—I had crossed the barrier between youth and middle age, and how had youth been wasted? In vain regrets, in bitter re- pinings, in loneliness and miserable dreams.

I said to myself:

"Man, you are an idiot; forget the fleeting joy of your youth, take your life in your hands. Marry. Have a home, a wife, children, like other men. Of boyhood's folly are born such raptures as those you feel for Edwina; they go, and revisit the heart no more. The toys of childhood please you no more; its sweets cloy upon your taste. No more can you be a boy than a child. Cast off this old delusion, trample it under foot. It has worked you evil enough already."

I arose and looked at myself in the glass, and saw a big fellow with a long light-brown beard. Those were not the womanish cheeks of Romeo. That was no pensive youth to die of love and longing.

"I will go to Monsieur Durand's and propose for the hand of Mademoiselle Rosalie, his daughter," I said. "She is a good young woman, and a pretty one. There will be no love-making required, and I shall do my duty as a husband. A bachelor old age is hideous."

I dressed myself as becomingly as possible and went forth. It was a fine day, and the streets were full of people. Gay dresses, gay faces, a certain magnetic thrill of merriment impossible in any other city made its impression on me. I had not felt so happy for years.

"Mongoose," said some one at my side—"mongoose, silver-plate—no, hang it!—seal voo play—oh, dear! Roo de what's his name? Polly voo English?"

It was an Englishman trying to ask his way in French, for as I faced him I knew Ralph Hay, whom I had not seen or heard of for eight good years.

He was stouter, redder, better dressed, evidently richer than he used to be; but I had no doubt of his identity.

"Ralph!" I cried, "don't you know me?"

"No, it ain't!" he cried. "Well, but it is, though—John Smith!"

We shook hands.

"I thought you were a confounded foreigner, and I was trying to talk your lingo," said Ralph. "You are a pretty fellow, aren't you? Are you married?"

"No. How is Mrs. Hay?"

"Splendid," said Ralph—"blooming, young as her daughter, and Gussie is seventeen now. I say, look here—I suppose we can talk anywhere about here without being understood?"

"In English, yes," I said.

"John Smith," said he, "I've something on my mind. I always was a bungling fellow, and—well, I don't know how to get at it. I've made money, you know, and I can afford to treat wifely and Gussie to a trip—if it is a treat—matter of taste that; but I came to Paris partly to hunt you up. I—I felt I ought to. I say, you know the day you went away from our house—no, I mean the day I came to your place of business and brought you a letter from Edwina?"

"I do," I said.

"Was there anything wrong about that letter?" he asked.

"A little," I said.

"Tell me what," he whispered.

"It refused me," I said. "I had offered myself to Edwina Earle."

"Look here," said Ralph, "you know your name is John Smith."

"Ay," said I.

"So is his," said Ralph.

"Whose?"

"The rector's," said Ralph. "His wife came over in a violent passion with Edwina, and said she'd written a love letter to him. Edwina felt dreadful—thought the woman was crazy. You see he'd written to her to offer her a school; and that morning she gave me two letters, one to post, 'tother to take. I think, maybe, I posted the wrong one and took 'tother. I haven't told 'em at home about it. You see the clergyman's wife tore his up. But you didn't come back. Edwina hasn't married, and, you see, I don't think Edwina did refuse you."

I made him no answer.

"Good heavens! has my blunder made you both unhappy all these years? You can't forgive me, can you? But come to the hotel with me. She's there, with wife and Gussie."

"Edwina, come closer to me. Have we forgiven good old Ralph? Ay, long ago. Many years lay between us, but our love lived through them all, and we shall never part again until death sunders us, my own Edwina."

M. R. A.

PINE APPLES.—West India pine apples, together with home-grown, and the tinned fruit from the United States, are likely to be put into the

shade by the imports from St. Michael's, where this cultivation is receiving almost as much attention as the orange. English-grown pine apples have long maintained the reputation of being of finer quality than imported fruit of that kind. Now, however, they are surpassed in winter by those from Saint Michael's, from which we get the same kinds as we grow at home, and like them, too, grown under glass. They arrive in our markets in excellent condition, averaging from 3½lb. to 7lb. in weight. A large consignment of these pines was recently disposed of by auction at prices ranging from 15s. to 21s. each, and the salesmen greatly prefer them to home-grown produce, inasmuch as they are of decided soundness in the heart, whereas English pines, though externally to all appearance sound, are sometimes discoloured at the core, and not unfrequently quite black.

SCIENCE.

As a means of avoiding explosions in the use of hydrogen apparatus, Fresenius says the gas may be passed through a tube containing a number of small discs of fine wire placed between cotton.

C. SCHNEIDER found in barley straw an average of 78 per cent. of nitrogen, in rye straw an average of 1.165 per cent., much smaller quantities than have usually been supposed to exist in these plants. The cause of this he ascribes to the care taken to remove all parasites often found on grain stalks.

WHEN beets are preserved for the manufacture of sugar they give off carbonic acid and take up oxygen. The carbonic acid is a product of the oxidation of the sugar contained in the beets. According to calculation, 1,000 cwt. beets would lose 10 cwt. sugar in thirty days. The air contained in the beets consists mainly of nitrogen and carbonic acid and very little oxygen.

DESULPHURIZING COKE.—Dr. Hoffman communicates the fact that the sulphur may be completely removed from coke by addition, in quenching it, of acid chloride of manganese, sulphuretted hydrogen being formed; manganese with some chloride remaining as a desirable addition to the coke. The solution of the acid chloride may be made in small leaden reservoirs and allowed to flow into the water tanks as needed.

INFLUENCE OF THE MOON.—The influence exercised by the moon on meteorological phenomena has been the subject of a communication to the Académie des Sciences of Paris by M. Marchaud. From examining the distribution of storms between the years 1785 and 1872 he supposes that he detects some relation between the appearance of storms and the age of the moon, and he attempts to show by tables that the moon has an appreciable influence on the temperature and pressure of the air, on the state of the sky, and the distribution of the rain.

WHITENING WOOL.—The sulphurizing of wool can, to a certain extent, be avoided by placing it, after scouring, in a blueing bath at 122 deg., composed (for 50 pounds of wool) of alum 2 pounds, tartar 9 ounces, sulphuric acid 1 pound, starch 9 ounces, sulphate of indigo 3 ounces, archil 1½ ounces; and working at that temperature for three quarters of an hour. The white thus obtained, though generally satisfactory, can be much improved by squeezing out the wool, without washing it, and dipping it in a lukewarm solution of one pound of chloride of barium. The sulphate of baryta, or permanent white, deposited in the fibres, adds to the weight as well as the whiteness of the wool.

PULVERIZED CHARCOAL.—Andersen discovered that pulverized charcoal applied to sheepskins produces depilation. Charcoal takes up oxygen from the air, and the oxygen in this form seems to exert a chemical influence on the fatty substance present in the neighbourhood of the glands of the hair. An oxidation takes place in the pores of the skin, which destroys the glands and loosens the hair. Finely powdered charcoal is mixed with sufficient water to make a thin paste, and the hides immersed for four and five days and well turned over in the meantime. After this the hair can be taken off at once. Hides treated with charcoal do not require further treatment, as is the case now with the lime process, and after being washed with water they are ready for tanning. The charcoal can be used over again. Animal or vegetable coal can be used in any quantity, having no deleterious property whatsoever, and for each hide six or ten pounds, with the necessary quantity of water, are sufficient. The temperature should be 61 deg. or 70 deg. Fah., and can easily be maintained by introducing steam into the vats. The tanning process is facilitated as no lime is left behind to neutralize the tannic acid.

GOLD IN BUTE.—An interesting discovery of gold has been made in Buté. A young boy, named George Lindsay, upon taking up a piece of quartz, seams of which exist in various parts of the island, noticed

the presence of a substance of which he had some idea might be gold. The specimen was submitted to Dr. Peter White, president of the Archaeological and Physical Society of Buté, and he immediately pronounced it to be auriferous quartz, with the precious metal present in the conditions known by experienced gold diggers as "heavy gold." This specimen was found in a vein of quartz which runs out into the sea below the Skeoch plantation. It has often been asserted by Australian diggers that, if properly searched for, gold would be found in Buté, but whether in such quantities as would yield remuneration for the labour is a question which can only be answered after the experiment has been made. Some time ago Mr. James Cameron, of Rothay, also discovered gold in the island, and had it made into a ring, which was presented to the present Marchioness of Buté on the occasion of her marriage. These specimens were got in different localities, thus showing that the assertions of the diggers are not unfounded.

THE COLOURING MATTERS OF LEAVES AND FLOWERS.—In an address to the Sheffield Naturalists' Club recently Mr. H. B. Sorby, the president, described some of the results to which he had been recently led by applying physical methods to the study of the evolution of plants. He had studied the changes that occurred in the colouring matters in leaves and flowers during their development from a rudimentary to a perfect state, and the connection between them and the action of light, and had found that there was apparently a most remarkable correlation. When more and more developed under the influence of light, coloured compounds were formed which were more and more easily decomposed by the action of light and air when they were no longer parts of living plants, but dissolved out from them. There was thus apparently some condition in living plants which actually reversed these reactions. He had also found that in the more rudimentary state of the leaves of the highest classes the colouring matters corresponded with those found in lower classes, and in the case of the petals of flowers their more rudimentary condition often corresponded with some other variety, which thus appeared as if due to a naturally arrested development of a particular kind. This principle would perhaps serve to explain the greater prevalence of flowers of particular colours in tropical or colder regions and at different elevations. Now, since the effect of the various rays of light was different, it became a question of much interest to decide whether an alteration in the character of the light of the sun would produce a somewhat different effect in the case of other classes of plants in which the fundamental colouring matters differed; for example, whether light with a relatively greater amount of the blue rays might not be relatively more favourable to the cryptogamia than to the flowering plants. So far this was a mere theoretical deduction, but if proved to be true by experiment it might at all events assist in explaining the difference in the character of the vegetation of our globe at an earlier epoch, when perhaps our sun was in a somewhat different physical state, and the light more similar to that of Sirius and other stars of the highest and bluer type.

HOW TO MAKE COARSE WOOD LOOK LIKE POLISHED MAHOGANY.

THE coarse wood is first coated with a coloured size, which is prepared by thoroughly mixing up, in a warm solution of one part of commercial glue in six parts of water, a sufficient quantity of the commercial mahogany brown, which is in reality an iron oxide, and in colour stands between so-called English red and oxide of iron. This is best effected by adding in excess a sufficient quantity of the dry colour with the warm solution of glue, and thoroughly mixing the mass by means of a brush until a uniform paste is obtained, in which no more dry red particles are seen.

A trial coat is then laid upon a piece of wood. If it is desired to give a light mahogany colour to the object, it is only necessary to add less, and for a darker colour more, of the brown body-colour. When the coat is dry it may be tested by rubbing with the fingers, whether the colour easily separates or not. In the former case more glue must be added until the dry trial coat no longer perceptibly rubs off with the hands. Having ascertained in this way the right condition of the size colour with respect to tint and strength, it is then warmed slightly, and worked through a hair sieve by means of a brush. After this it is rubbed upon the wood surface with the brush, which has been carefully washed. It is not necessary to keep the colour warm during the painting. Should it become thick by gelatinizing, it may be laid on the wood with the brush, and dries more rapidly than when the colour is too thin. If the wood is porous and absorbs much colour, a second coat may be laid on the first when dry, which will be sufficient in all cases. On drying, the size colour appears dull and unsightly, but the following coat changes immediately the appearance of the surface. This coat is

spirit varnish. For its production three parts of spirits of wine of 90 deg. are added in excess to one part of red scaroid resin in one vessel, and in another ten parts of shellac with 40 parts of spirits of wine of 80 deg. By repeated agitation for three or four days the spirit dissolves the resin completely. The shellac solution is then poured carefully from the sediment, or, better still, filtered through a fine cloth, when it may be observed that a slight milky turbidity is no detriment to its use. The resin solution is best filtered into the shellac solution by pouring through a funnel loosely packed with wadding.

When filtered the solutions of both resins are mixed by agitating the vessel, and letting the varnish stand a few days. The scaroid resin colours the shellac, and imparts to it at the same time the degree of suppleness usually obtained by the addition of Venetian turpentine or linseed-oil. If the varnish is to be employed as a coat, the upper layers are poured off at once from the vessel. One or two coats suffice, as a rule, to give the object an exceedingly pleasing effect. The coats dry very quickly, and care must be taken not to apply the second coat until the first is completely dry.

INSANITY AND SUICIDE.

INSANITY is literally the looking at a thing in unhealthy proportions. Ten years, five years, one year—a month, a day, or even a few hours later than an event, we often wonder to ourselves that we regarded it in so strong a light. How often do persons get to thinking about things at night, and become so indignant or outraged that they can scarcely remain in bed; or get to thinking about a debt they owe to-morrow, and are so fearful that the money may not come in from creditors, and protest, with all its horrors, stares them in the face, and they toss and turn in an agony of sweat, and, containing themselves no longer, they get up and frantically pace the floor by the hour, then, falling asleep from sheer exhaustion, they wake up to see the cheerful sun shining in the windows, and the postman brings more remittances than were needed?

Many who have treated consumption largely have died of the disease.

Hydrophobia has been brought on by the mere force of the imagination.

The celebrated Dr. Green, so famous at one time for treating diseases of the windpipe and its connections, after swabbing the throats of others for millions of times, perhaps, began at last to swab his own.

An eminent and able physician, who attended a lunatic asylum for twenty years at Lexington, Kentucky, killed himself the other day, himself a lunatic.

Several great scholars, who have made the prophecies their study, have died insane, and so with numbers who have studied perpetual motion. All men should be careful of getting into the rut of one subject, of one idea. There is at least one advantage of having a great many irons in the fire; the man who gives them equal attention never goes crazy. It is the brooding over one disagreeable thing which fills our madhouses; it is really the want of force of character, of moral courage, which leads to such a fate. The moment your sleep is disturbed about one thing for two nights in succession tear yourself away from it or you may be lost.

A DESERTED PALACE.—Speaking of the present condition of Buckingham Palace, a contemporary says:—"The first thing that must strike a stranger will assuredly be the dirty and untidy condition of the place. If he were to judge of the interior from what he sees, he must carry away a low opinion of boasted English cleanliness. The windows are coated with dirt, and many of the blinds seem to have lost the cords that once belonged to them, for they have been rolled up by hand. Altogether, the exterior of the palace suggests, not comfort within, but poverty and untidiness."

MARRIAGES IN FRANCE.—Paris, in addition to making Academicians and Cardinals, has not the less been occupied in making marriages. There were celebrated during the past year in Paris and its neighbourhood nearly fourteen thousand marriages, all made of course in heaven—save the forty-two separations that took place after four months' experience of matrimony. The deaths numbered nearly 40,000; the poor people rushed with a headlong impatience into marriage, but their richer brethren, being in doubt, largely abstained. The provinces also displayed their opinion, by an immense majority as compared with former years, that the world must be peopled.

THE PREMIER'S "THREE COURSES" STILL APPLICABLE.—It was a great joke against Peel that he was constantly in the habit of saying that there were "three courses" open to him. There appeared an amusing squib on this subject years ago in the

Morning Chronicle, in the form of a letter to the editor to this effect:—"Her Majesty is about to give a fancy dress ball, and I am commanded to attend. I am in a difficulty about the dress in which I shall appear. There seem to be three courses open to me—that I should go, first, in some sort of a fancy dress; or, secondly, in an ordinary Court dress; or, thirdly, in no dress at all.—R.P." The Premier's three courses seem still to be fashionable.

THE HAUNTED MILL.

We had been belated one autumn evening, and were driving along as fast as two spirited horses could well go, when my companion, who had the reins, jerked, with his whip, over his left shoulder, saying:

"Do you see that mill yonder? It is said to be haunted. And—heavens!" he added, suddenly, "there comes a real will-o'-the-wisp, to bear it out."

I looked westward, as my companion spoke, expecting to see only one of the ordinary wind-mills, and rather incredulous, I must confess, as to it, or anything else, being haunted. But what I saw startled me.

It was already quite dark. The stars were out overhead, and the young moon was also visible, but far down on the horizon, and partially obscured by the autumn mist, that was now rising ominously from the low grounds. In front of us was a bit of shallow water, thickly grown with rushes; beyond this some stunted trees, with two tall poplars rising dark in the distance; and a little to one side, on a piece of slightly elevated ground, a ruined mill, that, with its bare arms, and roof with everything gone but the rafters, looked like some ghastly skeleton, blackened with age and tempest. The evening breeze, that just rippled the moonlight on the surface of the pool and stirred the long rushes, rattled, with a weird sound, through the ragged ruin, as if a murderer was swinging in chains.

To crown all, and intensifying, if that were possible, the spectral character of the scene, a bright light, a veritable will-o'-the-wisp, was flickering and dancing in the foreground on the other side of the pool.

Though I knew that this light was only a gaseous exhalation its appearance, at that moment, and with its surroundings, gave me, I confess, a start.

My companion had pulled up, for a moment, that I might see the better.

"It makes one's blood run cold," he said, as he gave the horses their heads again. "And well it may," he added, after a moment, "for a fearful tragedy was enacted in yonder mill fifty years or nearly ago. I have often passed the place at night but it has never looked so weird as now. You have perhaps heard the tale. What? Not! Then I will tell it as we bowl along.

"Not two generations ago there stood, behind those trees, a handsome house, the property of a gentleman of fortune, who lived there with an only child, a daughter. Helen Hayward, as all who knew her united in saying, was one of the most beautiful girls of her day. I have seen a miniature of her in a white dress of the style of the First Empire, with a blue fillet in her hair; and it fully bears out this verdict of her contemporaries. It was one of those sweet, heavenly faces that make even the worst and most cynical of us men believe in woman's goodness and self devotion: dark, luminous, soft eyes; a low, broad forehead; rich, chestnut hair; a sensitive, delicate mouth; and an expression lovelier than all the rest, because instinct with spirituality and a high, heroic soul. It was the face of a woman," he added, with emphasis, "for whom a man would willingly die.

"Well," he went on, after a while, "it was the old story—she loved. The object of her affections was a young naval lieutenant, with whom she had become acquainted, at a ball, given by him and his brother officers, while their ship was lying in the harbour. He was as handsome, in his way, as she was in hers—the very bean ideal of a manly hero. His family too was one of the best in the country. His father had been a general in the army and his mother was descended from a long line of landholders. But, alas! he was poor, and poverty, in the eyes of Mr. Hayward, was the one sin that could never be forgiven, at least in a suitor for his daughter.

"The old man was known to be eccentric, and of violent passions, and was, I suppose, a miser, loving money for money's sake.

"He had formed, it appears, the most ambitious schemes for his child as a consequence of her beauty. She was to wed a millionaire; she was to queen it in society; she was to be presented at European courts and aristocratic princesses and monarchs, as women far less lovely had astonished them before. When, therefore, he discovered that she was in love with a penniless officer his wrath knew no bounds. He peremptorily forbade the suitor his house, and ordered his daughter to decline all invitations, lest

she should see Lieutenant Cavendish at some ball or other entertainment.

"But what was his rage, at the end of a week, to hear that Helen was in the habit of meeting her lover, and met him indeed every evening, and was intending to meet him again that very night! The place selected for their interviews was a windmill about a quarter of a mile from the house. It was the girl's own maid that had betrayed the lovers. Her mistress was accustomed to take her as a companion, leaving her to watch, near by, while she met her lover under the shadow of the old tower. 'Meets him!' cried the father, white with rage. 'As I live, they shall never meet again, or but once. I will first see for myself that she meets him, and then—'

"The maid, when she heard these words, and saw that face, the face almost of a maniac, so terrible was its hate, trembled for the result of her treachery and would have drawn back. But the furious old man would not permit this. He sternly bade her keep silence at the peril of her life. 'Go with your mistress as usual this evening,' he said. 'And mark! if I see any hesitation, I shall know you have deceived me, and you shall never see to-morrow or have a chance to deceive me again.'

"And she knew he would keep his word.

"In the dusk of the evening, I often think it must have been just such a weird one as this, the old man, watching from behind the curtain of his bedroom, to which he had retired, as he said, for the night, on pretence of not feeling well, beheld two figures steal from the house in the direction of the mill, and, descending the stairs, he dogged them, from a distance, concealing himself behind the fences and irregularities of the ground and the few stunted trees that then, as now, sparsely dotted the landscape. When near the mill one of the figures parted from the other, and disappeared on the farther side of the tower, while the maid remained, as if to keep watch, sheltering herself behind a low bush.

"The angry father brushed past her without a word, but with a warning look, in hot pursuit of his child. The door of the mill had been left purposely open by the lover, who was waiting inside. To see his daughter, as he did see her, clasped in the arms of the man he hated set the blood of Mr. Hayward on fire, and, darting up the steps, he sprang at the pair as if he had been a wild beast springing on its prey.

"The poor girl heard the approaching feet, looked around, and recognized her father with a shriek, just as his insane grip was laid on her, and she was whirled to the other side of the narrow apartment, where she staggered up against the wall, for the moment stunned and breathless. This was done so quickly that Lieutenant Cavendish had not time to interpose. Then Mr. Hayward faced the young officer, his face working, and white with passion.

"How dare you? Traitor! Villain!"

"The words came hissing out, red-hot with rage, and he shook his clenched hand at the other.

"The lover drew himself up haughtily, and all the blood left his face. But even in that moment of insult he remembered that the speaker was Helen's father. Before he could reply, however, the girl recovered her feet, and rushed back to her lover's side. With one arm resting on his shoulder, and the other held out deprecatingly to keep her parent off, she cried:

"It is I, not he, that is to blame. Father, oh! father!"

"The last words came quick and gasping, for the old man, now more insane than ever with hatred and rage, laid his hands, this time, on the young man himself; in fact, attempted to seize him by the throat. But Lieutenant Cavendish was twice as powerful as his assailant, and easily flung him off with one hand, while he encircled Helen's waist with the other, stepping back at the same time, as if to get out of the old man's reach.

"I am no traitor, or villain," said the young officer, proudly. "Nor is your daughter to blame. She was just bidding me a last farewell."

"Yes! yes!" she cried, eagerly. "I told him I would never marry any one without your consent. I will wait for him for years, I said—and Heaven knows I will—but I will never go against your commands."

"Was it at my command you met him here?" sneered the old man. "Ha! ha! You thought to make a fool of me, did you?"

"Not so," cried Helen. "Oh! father, be just."

"He took no notice of her piteous appeal, but advanced again on her lover.

"Unhand her, sir," he said, savagely, "or, by Heaven—"

"The sentence was cut short by a wild shriek from his daughter, for Mr. Hayward, as he spoke, drew a small pistol from the breast-pocket of his coat. Then, flinging her arms around her lover, and looking over her shoulder with scared face, Helen cried:

"Oh! father, don't, don't—"

"Let me go," cried the lover, in the same breath, trying to extricate himself. "He is mad, he will kill you." And he took the two poor little hands, that were clasped so tightly about his neck, and would have parted them.

"Leave him, or your death be on your own head," cried the father, stepping close up to the pair.

"His daughter gazed at him with her great eyes, imploringly, as a deer sometimes looks when the hunter's knife is at its throat; but she never let go her hold of her lover, being, for that supreme instant, stronger than even he.

"For it was only for an instant that this lasted. The three had really spoken together. The whole scene came and went like the rush of a whirlwind. The maid, hearing the shriek, the angry voices, the shuffling of feet, had overcome her terrors, and had hurried to the door of the mill. Just as she reached it, however, the climax came. Her foot was on the last step, when she saw Lieutenant Cavendish retreating, and quite close to her, while the infuriated father was following, with pistol raised and pointed. Helen was still clinging to her lover, interposing her body between him and her parent; and the lover was struggling to throw her off, so as to meet alone the vengeance of the father, or, if possible, to disarm him.

"At that moment Mr. Hayward fired. The maid saw the flash, it was almost directly in her face, and stopped with a scream. The lover staggered back, and had nearly fallen, for the poor girl had suddenly sunk, a dead weight around his neck, the blood gushing over her white dress from a bullet in her heart.

"Possibly, if the daughter had been less self-devoted, if she had not, with her heroic resolve to die rather than let her lover die, unconsciously impeded his efforts, possibly, I say, in such an event Lieutenant Cavendish might have disarmed the father. But Heaven alone knows! It was of those awful tragedies that recall the old Greek idea of fate, a tragedy that advances irresistibly to its culmination, compelling events into its vortex, and engulfing all its actors.

"For, as you may suppose, the life, even of the innocent survivor, was a ruined one. As for Mr. Hayward, he had always, as I have said, been eccentric, and from that fatal hour he went raving mad—had been mad, one should charitably hope, from the very beginning of that dread evening. He did not long survive. After his death the mansion remained tenantless, for nobody would buy it, or even lease it; and in the end it was pulled down. If you pass by those two tall poplars, that once flanked the gateway, you will find, just beyond, a grass-grown hollow, that marks the locality of the cellar, and you will see, here and there, a few fragments of brick-work, the remnants of the fire-place and chimney.

"Lieutenant Cavendish never married. He died in the prime of life. It was his custom whenever off duty to wander about that old mill, and visit again and again the grave where his lost Helen lay. There are some of the old inhabitants, who still remember him, a tall, soldierly man, gray before his time, and with a look as if he lived in this world without being of it. He was always, however, sucking service. It seemed as if he could find forgetfulness and peace only in action. He fell, at last, a victim to yellow fever, caught while nursing his crew.

"The old mill, ever since, has had the reputation of being haunted. The story is, that shrieks are heard there on dark autumn and winter evenings; that the sound of shuffling feet is borne afar on the night-wind, till the belated traveller shivers with superstitious dread; and that a white figure, its dress spotted with blood, goes round and round the tower, in the dim moonlight, wringing her hands piteously, and crying as if in entreaty, and sobbing and wailing. Many of those who live in the neighbourhood aver that they have seen this figure, and heard these sounds; and few can be persuaded to approach the place after sundown.

"Certain it is that the old mill began to fall into decay from the very hour of the tragedy. Nobody would send their corn there to be ground; the miller became insolvent; the edifice, deserted and left to wind and rain, gradually fell into the condition in which you see it. One would have thought that it would have tumbled down in some gale, long before this, for these events happened, as I have already told you, nearly fifty years ago. But the curious thing about it is that, after having reached its present state of dilapidation, the progress of decay seems to have been interrupted, as if it was destined, by a Higher Power, to remain a monument of sin."

By this time the lamps of the town were close ahead and it was with a sensation of relief that we rattled down the High Street, and soon after reached my friend's hospitable home, its warm lights welcoming us as we drove up the carriage-sweep to the great hall door.

A. C. E.

DRIED oysters are among the imports into San Francisco from China. They are simply taken out

of the shell, dried in the sun, and packed in wooden boxes. The Chinese are the principal consumers.

THE ORIGINAL "BRADSHAW."—The first number of "Bradshaw" contained nothing more than one page, showing the Liverpool and Manchester trains, and a small map of England and Wales.

THE MILDNESS OF THE SEASON.—During last month several robins' nests were found with eggs in thatched sheds, and a nest of thrushes was taken from a holly-tree in Holwood Park, Keston, Kent. In the woodbanks violets and primroses are in full bloom in many parts of the country.

THE DONOR OF THE HOLBORN STATUE.—The rumour that the statue of the Prince Consort, recently erected on the Holborn Viaduct, is the gift of Mr. Oppenheim is not the case. The donor is a very benevolent City gentleman of considerable wealth, who is desirous that his name should not be announced; and it is, we believe, known only to her Majesty, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and to Alderman Sir J. C. Lawrence.

A LABOUR OF LOVE.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT ten o'clock of that same night a gentleman and his servant were briskly driving up the Childerwith avenue in a showy vehicle.

The gentleman, springing out on the doorsteps between the dragons, drew off his dogskin gloves with precision, while gazing after his groom and horse, and remarked to himself:

"Might have saved myself the trouble! Safe and snug in the best room in the house, while I've been dragged from my club to take this journey on her behalf! Catch a woman not wriggling out of every difficulty and into every good thing! Never saw one of 'em so able to take care of herself as this one!"

And flinging the end of his cigar into a parterre of Annabel's geraniums he rang the door-bell.

Admitted with stately welcome by the footman, he asked if Sir Marcus was still up.

Yes, Sir Marcus was up, oh, yes, indeed! as anybody could tell by the heavy tremor of the bed-room floor beneath his tread, and the deep growling in the air.

"What? What are you doing here?" cried he, explosively.

"Thanks for the graceful welcome," returned the colonel, throwing himself into a chair and stretching out his handsome legs before the fire. "Glad to see my honourable parent in such robust health and spirits."

"What d'ye mean by passing that girl off as your wife when she's no more your wife than I am? Explain this moment, sir! ex—"

"My good sir, be calm! Heaven forbid that I should have either of you to wife! But before we enter upon the charming subject permit me to ask how my stepmother is."

"Your stepmother's worse. She'll never be better. There, make a clean breast, you dog, or I'll turn you out of the house."

"Be calm, dear father; such vivacity must be trying to one at your time of life. So poor Lady Thorncliff is sinking! My would-be wife I suppose is well and comfortable?"

"Confound you! If you had taken care of her like a man she would have been!" cried the baronet, stamping about. "Heaven knows where she is now, poor thing—and serve her right!" he added, vengefully.

"Is she not here?" inquired the colonel, somewhat surprised. "They told me at the village that you had sent for her to return after she was on her way to London."

"So I did; and here's that presuming puppy, Adderley, been in to tell me that he intercepted her on my very premises, and made her confess her imposture and go away to her people in London! Gad! I kicked him out at the door for his pains! To crawl into my sight after—after—" and rage choked the old man's farther utterance.

"What? Was Adderley with her?"

"Ay, that was he," gulped Sir Marcus, wrathfully. "What is there that he hasn't his meddling nose in, the hound? If you'd stuck to poor Marian—no, confound her! Jane Vail or whatever she is called—she'd have been at her post now with your stepmother, who can't live without her!"

"I knew nothing about the girl, Sir Marcus, until I came here the other day. But surely, sir, it was a strange proceeding for her to turn back when on the grounds!"

"Adderley's doings. Wheedled her out of my coach before my servants' eyes! George! I'd like to fire a broadside into him!"

"Which of the servants drove the coach?"

"Who would drive the coach but Dodge? Have I any other coachman than Dodge? Had I ever?"

Con—Where now? Can't ye bear to sit five minutes in the company of your own father that you've scarce spoken to these five years, when ye see him so crossed by disappointments? The young hypocrite! and as pretty a tongue and shipshape a little craft as ever lived!"

"I'm off for the night, Sir Marcus. Will be back to-morrow. Good night!" and he was out like a shot.

Ten minutes later the colonel was spinning down the avenue of Childerwith, with his groom and Dodge for company.

At the point as nearly as he could make out in the moonlight with his age-blurred eyes, where Lord Adderley had been seen last with Jane Vail, Dodge drew up now. The colonel and his servant alighted, and, leaving Dodge to attend the fidgety grays, they pushed their way through the belt of trees that my lord had traversed some three hours before with his struggling captive. And it was not long before Colonel Thorncliff gave a shout to his man, and pointed to the broken branches and crushed shrubs, which attested to the manner in which Jane Vail had been borne away from Childerwith.

"There is a spot over there lonely enough for the commission of any crime. Come on," cried he, and bounded over the springy turf to the open moor.

"Darn it!" muttered the gentle Saunders, making the best of his legs to keep up with his master. "What a tear he's in! Never saw him so eager before."

All at once an appalling cry came thrilling on the wings of the night wind! another and another, piercing, frantic, despairing!

"Coming!" cried the colonel, in a mighty voice, and went leaping over the moor, and lancing through the moonlight like an antelope—his servants after him, with eyes distended to their widest.

Jane Vail had to kiesel in a few inches of water—enough to chill a woman to the bone who was exhausted with fear and excitement almost to death.

Long, long before the first hour was out her limbs were benumbed, her teeth chattering, and she was shuddering with deadly cold. Still the pair of sentinels sat, comfortably smoking, on their sandhill, slapped their arms about their shoulders, and, when one position of ease became irksome, tried another.

Long before the second hour was out the fugitive, with her head in her lap, and her pulse at feeble fifty, was dozing or swooning—it would be hard to say which. The hope of escape was almost as feeble as the life in her veins. Any moment Lord Adderley's bloodhound might come tearing among the flags; any moment a chance movement might bring the two watchers down upon her; any, undiscovered by any, she might die of very exposure; yet, while she could reason, she instinctively did all in a mortal's power to preserve her life while she had it.

The moon rose—shone bright—mounted higher, brighter—seemed determined to thrust her glittering rays down upon her in her hiding-place and reveal her to her enemies.

In the third hour nature overcame Jennie Vail. She sank upon the oozy ground, heedless of the water, heedless of the waving of the tall flags, which her slight movement set in motion, heedless of the distant baying, coming nearer and nearer—of the thud of light, swift feet—of the fierce bark of joy—of the shadowy figure leaping among the sedges—of the red eyes and dripping fangs of Lord Adderley's famous bloodhound.

She awoke from her miserable trance with a wild shriek. The animal had attacked her ferociously, and was dragging her out of her concealment; the two men were running to the spot, with cries of command to the dog to let go.

So torn were her arms, her shoulder, and her poor bleeding hands, from which the newly formed skin had been peeled in her struggles with Dimon Adderley, that they thought she was dying when they wrenched her from the dog.

"Here's a go!" exclaimed the worthy whose name among his friends was "Club-foot Dick." "The gent has gone home, and giv' that there brute the scent of her, and packed him off, humding, to help us to find her. She's done for, anyhow, and we may as well give her the dip."

"Oh! oh! save me!" moaned Jane, feebly clinging to the iron-like arm of Mr. Grigor, as the hound leaped up and greedily licked the blood which dripped from her.

"Hullo! you're there, are you?" ejaculated Dick.

"Much hurt, ma'am?"

"I don't know. Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't let him get at me! Oh! oh!"

"No, he shan't get at yer, unless you refuse to come along with us to his lordship. If yer won't, why, then we'll have to leave yer."

Jane's spirit came back.

"Let me down, you fiends! I'd rather trust to the dog than its master! Let me go, I say."

"Are yer agoin' to the Chase, or not?" said Grigor, dropping her. "Be off, ye brute, till I tell yer to come on!"

"I'll not go to Eywood Chase alive!"

"Hear that, Dick?"

"I hear. Let's gag her, and carry her."

Then ensued a struggle.

The two ruffians seized the desperate girl; she, done to death as she was, resisted them with the strength of despair; the hound making snatches at her, and only driven off by the men's thick boots; while oaths and curses bore witness to the damage they sustained.

"Can't ye hinder hands, you Dan?" roared one to the other.

"An' I tryin' to, an' hasn't she bit my fingers to the bone, 'cause I won't let her screech?"

"Seems to me we aren't agoin' to get her over to the Chase, eh, Dan?"

"It seems so. What's the good of tryin'? Pays the same either way. Let's—"

"All right. Here's as good a place as any."

"So it is."

"Goon, then."

"Goon, you. I'm doin' my share."

"I aren't got a hold of her."

"Take a hold, then. No shirkin', old chap! This here aren't goin' to lay heaviest on my shoulders."

"You knock her on the head, an' I'll douse her in the lime pit."

"All right!"

Dan slightly released his victim, that he might adjust his club into convenient swinging distance.

The instant her mouth was free of his coarse hand Jane Vail called up all her strength, and poured forth a scream of agony, while the men flung themselves upon her, and the dog tore her dress to ribbons.

"Halloo—oh! Coming!" shouted a voice.

Off went both heroes like mad; the dog, seized his prey and dragged her down to the earth; Jane's last effort for life was made.

In a moment a man who seemed to be flying over the fence came in sudden contact with the panic-stricken Richard and felled him to the earth with one blow, which caused his bullet head to hit the ground with the concussion of a felled ox. His nimble-footed comrade was caught by the same iron fist, held by the throat, kicking, plunging, twisting, spluttering until with blackened face and limp body he was safe to be flung over the insensible form of the first sufferer of English vengeance.

Then Colonel Thorncliff, shouting to his servant to tie those rascals securely, sent my lord's fine hound about his lawful business with a kick, and raised the adventures in his arms.

"Great Heavens!" he muttered, staring down at his piteous armful, whose small wan face and white shoulder exposed and torn—whose lacerated hands and pulseless heart showed the signs of her fearful struggles; "she's dead! she's dead! Oh, poor girl! look at her wounds! She's been in the river too! Saunders! that's Adderley's dog. Shoot him—he's murdered her!"

Saunders drew the colonel's revolver from his pocket and shot the prowling brute through the head.

"Now come and see what you can do for this poor little girl. Take the top off my brandy flask and run for water—I'll pour some brandy down her throat meanwhile."

Off went the servant, and the master sat on a bank with Jane Vail across his knees, and her head upon his arm, pouring a few drops at a time between her lips as though she had been a baby. He did not think of contamination now; he forgot all about her assurance in calling herself his wife; he even forgot that she was not a lady like the stately Annabel in his indignation at finding her thus.

"Look up, dear," murmured he, bending anxiously over her, and watching the closed eyelids as a mother watches her dying child's. "You're safe now, brave girl! What a child she is. Poor, innocent little face! Open your eyes, Jane—Jennie! You've got a friend with you at last. I wonder why that villain Adderley dared this dark business! He'll suffer for it! Jennie—Jennie! Sweet little face! Who would think that there was guile behind it! I don't believe it! She tried to save my poor stepmother. Look up, dear girl—see who is taking care of you! You sent for me and I am here! Heavens! how curious to remember that she held my head when I was nearly killed, and now I am with her! Jennie—Jennie, for Heaven's sake speak to me!"

And Jane Vail, opening her languid eyes, and shivering into consciousness, thought by the tender tones and the loving words that she was back again upon her mother's bosom.

"Oh, mother—mother!" she whispered, brokenly,

"he offered death or dishonour—and I chose death!"

"Ay!" said the soldier, with a steel-like flash of the eye, "did he though?"

Had the whole story been told him he could not have understood it better.

When the young woman wholly recovered her senses it was to find Colonel Thorncliff washing the blood from her wounds and binding them up with strips of his handkerchief, while Colonel Thorncliff's servant assisted him. And so overwhelming was the sight of these pitying, friendly faces, after the treachery, and the pain and despair of the past few hours, that she burst into hysterical weeping, and clung to them as if she was going frantic—which indeed she was in danger of doing, poor soul.

So then the only thing to be done was to send Saunders scamping for more water so as to give him a chance to gather her up tight, and comfort her after his own fashion.

"Heaven bless your heart! You've nothing to fear any more while my father and I are above the ground! Childerwit is your castle of protection, my dear; upon my life it is! There! there, dear Jennie! dear Jennie! We'll help you to free your father. We will, whoever he is! Now—now! don't cry! You'll get over all these hurts by-and-by! Poor child!"

Jane could answer nothing; it is doubtful whether she heard half of what he was pouring out, but she gave him a brilliant smile of gratitude, and fairly shivered herself back into insensibility.

So all that could be done was to leave Mr. Saunders in charge of Miss Dick and Dan, and to march off double-quick time, with Jane Vail huddled up in his arms to the carriage. Arrived there, he deposited her on the seat, wrapped in his own military cloak, took the reins from the hands of the bewildered Dodge, and came galloping up to Childerwit.

It was by this time close upon midnight, and when Colonel Thorncliff applied for admittance only sleepy Chick stood in the hall rubbing his eyes and mumbling that all the rest were abed.

Clark was sent, broad enough awake, for Mrs. Trimm to attend to "that lady out there;" and the colonel carried the said lady into the nearest chamber and laid her upon a ruby satin couch, a mere heap of wrappings, which dripped water and mud to show the way it went. Having stayed long enough to put it into the best care of astounded Mrs. Trimm, he bolted into Sir Marcus's bed-chamber, heedless of a major's audible slumber.

"Sir Marcus!" shouted he.

The old navy officer—dreaming doubtless of some grand sea-fight—jerked himself upright in bed, spluttering:

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And groped for his sword.

"Wake up!" cried the colonel.

"Give 'em a broadside!" spluttered the baronet.

The soldier shook the sailor, seeing he was all abroad on unknown waters, until the familiar "Hillo! hang ye!" proclaimed that Sir Marcus was his own self again.

"Attention, Sir Marcus," said the colonel, peremptorily.

"What the deuce is the matter?" snapped the baronet.

"Are you fully awake?"

"Yes, confound you! What hour of the night's this?"

"I have found the girl—"

"Eh—what's that? found Marian!"

"On the moor by the lime pits—"

"The gipsy!"

"Struggling for her life with two cut-throats, while Adderley's bloodhound tore at her hands and dress!"

Sir Marcus sprang out on the floor, cursing enough to make one quake, and upset everything in the room in search of his daily garb—a figure replete with valour without valour's dignity.

"I left the villain tied neck and crop for the jail market, with my man for guard, until such time as you send a cordon of your servants," the colonel shot in between his sire's volleys; "and the girl I brought home sorely wounded and exhausted, but breathing yet. Father, I place her under your protection."

"All right, Lawry—all right! Poor Marian!—little jade! If she'd trusted me at first, and not listened to that scheming serpent."

"And now the question is, shall Dimon Adderley escape with this night's villainy?"

"No, he shan't—the liver-hearted thief! We'll make him walk the plank—we'll teach him to meddle with my guests! Thunder and guns! I'm a magistrate and I'll have him arrested out of his rascally bed this very night. Hullo! You, Jones! Hu—"

"Softly, father! Let us hear the young woman's story first, and make the two men confess who em-

ployed them. We must have our proofs ready or he'll rout us after all."

For once in their lives father and son acted in concert; and by the time the old baronet had got through his toilet he was calm enough to deliberate what course would be the wisest, and to issue his orders for the transportation of the two prisoners to the nearest jail; the transaction to be performed with the most careful regard to secrecy that Lord Adderley might not be put on his guard.

It was also decided that Jane Vail's return to the house should be concealed from all but Mrs. Trimm and Flora, the lady's-maid (whom Miss Ingrave had dismissed, but whom Sir Marcus had recalled), and to secure this end she was removed to a distant part of the mansion and placed in one of the grand bed-chambers of the departed Thorncliffs.

So it came about that when poor Jennie awoke out of her long swoon it was to find the dank marsh wind and the reeling stars and the too-cold garments a dream of the past, while kind faces and delicious warmth, silken curtains and the sense of profound rest folded her into a blessed present.

Her wounds were all dressed, and there sat pretty Flora by her side in the rose-light of dawn, while some one went "Tramp! tramp! tramp!" up and down the farther end of the chamber.

"Who is that?" whispered Jane; and Flora bent over her with an exclamation, and the tramping came up to the bedside, and Sir Marcus bent over her too, with a queer tenderness in his rough old face.

"D'ye know me, Marian?" asked he, in a subdued growl.

"Yes," sighed Jane.

"I am your father then from this minute until you get back your own—d'you hear?"

"Yes!" again sighed Jane; and "Bless you—bless you!" said her two shining eyes.

"Can you tell me anything about last night's work, my dear? How you got on to the moor and what the men were after?"

Jane shuddered and closed her eyes.

"Well then, just tell me this—was it Dimon Adderley's doing? and do you think he meant murder?"

To both these questions Jane whispered:

"Yes."

"That'll do, my dear. Go to sleep now, and get well and strong, for Lady Thorncliff will be wanting you. Give her some wine, girl, and make her eat."

And out he marched.

Those gentlemen, Club-fist Dick and Dark Dan, found themselves in an ugly scrape when, handcuffed, and with bursting heads, they came to themselves in a cell of the village jail, and so wildly despairing did they become when they called to mind the loose principles of their noble employer, and how unlikely it was that he would implicate himself by shielding them, that with one accord they resolved to turn Queen's evidence, and to this end wrote their confessions on two greasy papers and sent them to Sir Marcus.

Upon receipt of these documents, and acting upon the advice of his son, who had ten times his acumen, Sir Marcus caused a telegram to be sent from Greenwich in the precise words prescribed by Lord Adderley, to that gentleman at Eywood Chase, and in the course of twenty-four hours had a post-office order for one hundred pounds to Mr. Grigor from Lord Adderley in his possession, with this note:

"A steamer sails for California from Wapping at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. Take your chances, both of you, and don't show your noses in England again."

D. A.

Sir Marcus had cooled down considerably from his first fiery determination to throw Lord Adderley into a criminal's prison, but it was with a grin of delight that he placed these proofs of guilt into Colonel Thorncliff's hands and remarked that Dimon had made a rope with those long, sneaking fingers of his that would choke him yet.

The colonel looked up the two confessions, the hushmoney and the note, in his father's desk, and then said, impressively:

"We have it in our power to condemn Dimon Adderley to the same fate as that to which he condemned his Cousin Anthony, but we must respect the honour of an old house, and for the sake of the brave girl who saved Lady Thorncliff's life preserve its escutcheon free from stain. Let us have patience until Lady Thorncliff is able to tell us the early history of the Adderleys, and until Jane Vail can lay before us the reasons which moved her to come forward as Anthony's daughter. When all is in our hands let us confront his lordship, demand justice for the rightful owner of the title and estate, and, being refused that, threaten him with the crimes of which we have proof. Meantime the two rascals who are now in jail may be quietly liberated after a private investigation here, and instructed to hide themselves where they can be found by us should they be wanted."



[JANE VAIL'S HIDING-PLACE.]

To this course Sir Marcus agreed; and so great seeming peace and quietness reigned over Childerwich, while its mistress slowly emerged from her death-in-life condition, and its hidden guest did battle with pain and weakness and feverish prostration.

Miss Annabel Ingrave was in the very lowest of spirits. A presentiment of danger beset her. Every one and everything about her wore a stern and forbidding aspect. Sir Marcus never looked at her when necessity compelled him to address her. The colonel ignored her existence. Lady Thorncliff trembled did she but enter her sick chamber. Lord Adderley, forbidden Childerwich, did not even visit their secret places of meeting—made no attempt whatever to see his faithful ally.

Annabel felt strangely dejected. Though she was convinced that Jane Vail would never return to trouble her more, and that Lady Thorncliff would never regain remembrance of the night of her accident, though it was certain that Dimon Adderley must come soon now to reward her for her services by making her his wife—that she knew too many of his secrets to be slighted—yet Annabel was often filled with despair.

Sometimes she thought she would creep at midnight over to Eyewood Chase, and, throwing herself at the feet of the man who was the master of her life, the controller of her fate, pray him to love her or let her die!

Eyewood Chase was some four miles distant from Haythorpe-in-the-March. The ancient castle stood shoulder deep in ivy among the oaks that had been planted by the Vail-Adderleys of four centuries ago.

It spread its majestic bulk over a good acre; from its long-disused east wing, gradually decaying into a picturesque ruin, to its handsomely modernized west wing, formed quite a walk.

It would take half a day to thoroughly visit and admire the endless suites of rooms in Eyewood Chase, not to speak of the quaintly laid-out gardens and retreats and grottoes whose varied beauties were due to the taste of a vanished generation.

Excursionists from London often visited the Chase, and requested permission to wander over the old part of the pile, and picnic in a quiet way among the bats and owls and ivy. The sly lodge-keeper turned a good many pennies in that way—when Lord Dimon was absent.

It was a considerable surprise, however, to this prudent person to receive an application from Sir Marcus Thorncliff one clear day for permission to visit the Chase—especially as it was rumoured that

there was some unpleasantness between the baronet and Lord Adderley.

Nevertheless, since Lord Adderley had gone to London two days ago, and was not likely to return within the week, the lodge-keeper thought there would be no harm—especially after Jones handed him a crown-piece.

The result was that the Thorncliff family ark, containing Sir Marcus, his son, and Jane Vail closely shrouded in her veil, passed through the gates and rolled up to Eyewood.

Jane stood upon the threshold of her father's boyish home, trembling. From all this state and imposing splendour he had been thrust by a usurper.

"Have courage," muttered the colonel, taking her hand; and he added as if he had read her thoughts: "you have within your grasp the key which will unlock the prison doors."

Yes, Lady Thorncliff had come to her senses at last, and finished the story begun so long ago!

The keeper of the old part of the castle came, keys in hand, and to him quoth Sir Marcus, after they had duly examined and admired the crumbling State chambers and picture gallery (where many a pair of deep gray eyes, just like Jane's, looked down upon her in benignant welcome):

"Show us the Muniment Room."

"The Muniment Room!" ejaculated the old man, backing with consternation. "That, Sir Marcus, has not been unlocked since my master died seventeen years ago!"

"Open it now, Giles. I ask you in the name of Anthony Vale-Adderley!"

The keeper stood rooted with surprise at these words, but anon with a deep sigh and a smothered "Poor Master Anthony! He is dead too!" he led the way, making no farther opposition to the strange demand.

The muniment room contained all the family documents in an immense ebony box, carved all over with dragons, satyrs, and goblins, and clasped with silver clasps which time's mould had turned brown. Clumsy attempts at the faces of succeeding barons ornamented as medallions in alto-relievo the centre of each panel; the present lord's was here executed when my lord had newly got the title, and it looked if possible more fiendish than my lord himself.

There were not many empty panels left, but at least there was room for the face of Anthony the Convict!

Ancient weapons and coats of armour hung thick on the walls, and dust covered everything, even to the velvet carpet upon which the sacred repository was laid.

"Now look here, Giles," said Sir Marcus, looking

at these ancient relics with a laugh of derision—there was never an Adderley he would give a brass farthing for saving and except the girl by his side. "Lady Thorncliff says you were here when the present owner of this place and Anthony his cousin were boys, and that you know all the circumstances connected with Anthony's death. I want you to tell the family history to this young lady, and when you've done to open this fusty old locker and give her the records of that time."

The aged retainer stared, as well he might, at this abrupt request, and faltered forth:

"Who is the lady that bids me dare his lordship's anger and reveal the secrets of his house?"

"Look for yourself, old man!" interposed Colonel Thorncliff, removing her veil; "my step-mother, Lady Thorncliff, says you have only to look at her and you'll know whose daughter she is."

The old man put on his spectacles and gazed at the pale girl-face before him, and shook his head; at which Jane broke into that sudden, beaming smile which so well became her, and then he gasped:

"His very own!" and stood entranced, waiting for another.

"Well?" queried the colonel.

"Oh, sirs! she has my dear Master Anthony's trick of smiling! Lady, are you a Vail-Adderley?"

"Yes," murmured Jane, trembling; "I am Anthony's daughter."

Giles looked at her wistfully, and sadly shook his white head.

"My young master was never married!" muttered he.

"You're an idiot, Giles!" cried Sir Marcus, with his usual plainness. "If Dimon Adderley told you so that's no reason that it's the truth! There's his marriage lines to show for it, with Ellen Fairfax, and the record in the Edgecombe parish church of Derbyshire, and facts are facts you know!"

"True, Sir Marcus," said the old servant, "but—but—" and then he caught Jane's well-loved smile again, and bewildered, agitated, adoring, he knelt at her feet and kissed her hand.

"For the sake of my father, whose faithful friend you were, Mr. Giles," faltered Jane, "tell me what you know of his life."

With tears streaming down his withered cheeks the old man clasped his hands, and, looking up, ejaculated, piously:

"Heaven be thanked that Master Anthony's child has come to her own!"

His auditors smiled, but allowed him to proceed in his own way.

(To be continued.)



[MRS. ASTON ANNOUNCES VISITORS.]

SHIFTING SANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Elgiva; or, the Gipsy's Curse," "The Snapt Link," "The Lost Coronet," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LXVII.

She was a lady in her earliest youth,
The last of that illustrious family.
He who observed her ere he passed on,
Gazed his fill, and gazed and gazed again,
That he might call it up when far away,
So lovely, yet so arch, so full of mirth.

"HAVE you heard that Lord Treville and his son and Miss Netta—that is, Lady Carew—have returned, and are at the Manor, my lady?" inquired Mrs. Aston, pausing a little in the boudoir of the countess, after receiving her orders for the day.

Marian had now been in her old home for some weeks; the funeral obsequies of the earl were over, and a dreary blank seemed to stretch like a pall over her whole present and future life.

It was but a cold, joyless grandeur that now surrounded her in her solitary home, albeit she was too proud to acknowledge even to herself the real desolation of her life.

Yet as she sat in the luxurious apartments that were the only part of the castle which she chose at present to inhabit the fair countess actually envied her own domestics in their cheerful gatherings, their light-hearted gaiety that came at intervals on her ears when some casual opening of doors or unusual wandering on her part from her especial portion of the mansion placed her within the hearing of laughter and cheery carouse in the domestic regions.

Aston perhaps guessed, though she did not hint at the depression that clouded more than even a natural filial sorrow the spirits of her young lady.

And the startling announcement in question of the advent of the Carews was partly intended as a rousing piece of intelligence to break the misty sadness of Lady Marston's mood.

Marian hastily lifted her hand from the book she had before her.

"Indeed, what has brought them here, Aston?" she asked, eagerly. "I should have supposed they would have gone to Treville Court if they returned to England, instead of that ill-omened place."

"Well, my lady, I did hear that it was to wind up as it were Mr. Carew's affairs. You perhaps did not know that there was a paper which was not to be opened till Miss Netta, or I should say Lady Carew, was seventeen. And you see she is that and past it, my lady. So I have little doubt that my lord has come here to see about matters, and per-

haps shut up and let the place, my lady, which in some respects would be better for them and for you too, to my thinking."

Lady Marston did not reply for the moment, she was perhaps contrasting Netta's fate with her own. The frivolous, petted, butterfly heiress was in the undisturbed possession of all dearest to her. Rank, love, even a guardian uncle's care and wisdom as her right from her claims as niece and daughter—all was hers, while she had but the barren honour of wealth and station and her own free will to bring happiness to her heart. True, when the mourning days were over she might blaze forth on the world as a fashion's queen, an object for men's homage and strife, but as the countess—not as Marian Bidulph—should she thus taste such doubtful triumph. Aston was about to retire from the room to leave her lady in the enjoyment of her reflective mood when a sound of footsteps in the hall was followed by a servant's quick approach with a card on his salver, which the housekeeper took from him and delivered to the countess with a half-veiled curiosity as to its effect upon her.

It bore the name of the very person who had just been the subject of conversation—the Earl of Treville. And had the ghost of Sibbald Carew paid such a visit Marian could scarcely have been more astonished at the announcement.

"Will you see him, my lady?" asked the housekeeper.

"Yes," said the girl, somewhat uneasily, "yes. But not here. Take him into the library. It is a more fitting place for business, which I suppose must have brought Lord Treville here," she added, rather to herself than her domestic.

The young countess made but a slight addition to her boudoir toilet before she went to receive her visitor. A gold necklet, with a large locket set in diamonds, alone varied her sombre attire, and Cora St. Croix herself could scarcely have looked more unpretending in dress and surroundings than this heiress of broad lands and titles and wealth.

Lord Treville's greeting was certainly far more kind but not less embarrassed than on the former interview at Cannes, and Marian's sadness seemed re-echoed, like the dying cadences of a song, when he first spoke.

"You will pardon my intrusion since it is only pressing business that brings me here, Lady Marian, and, as I shall not remain longer than possible at the Manor, I conquered my repulsive repugnance to such a visit and came myself rather than delegate my errand to another."

Marian bowed in silence. There would have been idle deception in an assurance of pleasure at seeing that stern, haggard man.

The earl accepted the chair she pointed to him near her own, and for a moment seemed to pause for words or courage to begin.

"There seems to be a strange fatality in the experience of my unfortunate brother and myself, Lady Marston, which has connected us in a measure with you and yours. And the discovery of my own long-lost son was not nor remarkable than the facts I am here to communicate."

Marian did feel a wild throb in her pulses at this ominous beginning. There was sufficient mystery surrounding the past history of her family to bring a painful feeling of alarm at any such preliminary warning.

"You are very kind, my lord. I should of course prefer the information from your own lips," she said, in a subdued tone.

"So I presumed, and indeed it behoved me to carry out the behest of my unhappy brother, even though it entails the repetition of his confession," returned the earl, more firmly. "In few words, Lady Marston, it appears that Sibbald was a rival of the two brothers to whose unfortunate fate your father's enjoyment of their title and estates was owing. No doubt you must have heard of the fatal beauty of Miss Merrick, which caused a well nigh fratricidal quarrel between the sons of the Lord Marston of that time, and which seems to have equally infatuated my own inexperienced brother."

The earl paused for the young girl's assent and then continued the narrative.

"This will account for the remarkable directions and information left in the paper by Mr. Sibbald Carew, which I have only yesterday opened and perused, and which throws so much light upon the past history of your family and his own career."

Again he paused, and Marian grew impatient at the ominous delay.

"Excuse me, my lord, but the truest kindness you can show me is by at once telling me the truth," she said, eagerly. "I am not so weak that I cannot bear the worst which is possible you have to communicate, though," she added, haughtily, "I can scarcely suppose it will affect me so deeply as you would imply."

Lord Treville smiled bitterly.

"It is only for me to obey your behests, Lady Marston," he resumed; "and I will do so as briefly as may be. The whole affair is simply this. My brother appears to have been at once a jealous and a generous lover, for when the first frenzy of despair was over at the certainty that Miss Merrick was lost to him for ever he was honourable enough to act the part of brother and friend in a most trying moment."

"In few words, Lady Marston, he was present

and a witness at the secret marriage of Philip Biddulph and Ida Constance Merriok, and also at the baptism of their child, just ere they sailed for the distant land whither they were bound. And in the packet, which was not to be opened till his daughter was of suitable age, he had among other directions and trusts, endorsed certificates of the events, which he had undertaken to preserve in case of necessity such as has arisen."

"And what is the nature of this necessity?" asked Marian, sharply.

"Simply this, Lady Marston, you will understand that whatever motives may have induced my brother to delay the revelations so long I, at any rate, am bound to carry out the directions he has bequeathed, and ere I did so I considered it was due to you to give you the warning that there may probably—or at the very mildest—possibly be another heir living to the wealth and titles you possess. And, if you will permit, I can very easily prove to you the truth of this assertion. It appears that Philip Biddulph contracted a secret but perfectly legal marriage with Miss Merriok, long before he took her away from this country, and the child was born, to whom my brother actually consented to stand sponsor."

"But when that was all accomplished, when they had actually left the country, and the magic influence which Mrs. Biddulph seemed to have exercised over him was removed, the bitterness of disappointed love evidently was once more in my brother's mind. Then all was silent, save some vague hint of the wreck of the vessel in which they sailed, and they and their child seem to have passed into the forgotten and the past."

"And why not? why should there be any doubt that it is so? why are any fresh and harassing questions to be raised?" asked Marian, impatiently.

"Simply, Lady Marston, from the very peculiar circumstances that have come to my knowledge," observed Lord Treville, calmly. "I have certain information from the memorandum attached to the certificate of the name of the vessel in which the unfortunate young couple sailed, and though, from what my brother says, I have little doubt that it was rather to vindicate Miss Merriok's honour that he left this packet, I still have full proof that the vessel in question was wrecked, and, moreover, that it is not yet certain that the child perished with its parents."

Lord Treville spoke in a slow, impassive tone that was more thrilling than words.

And Marian, however unwillingly, caught the contagion of the solemnity.

"You mean to convey to me the impression that I am by no means secure in my position, and that there may be another heir of the Biddulphs living," she said, in a low tone.

"That is my meaning, I confess," was the reply of the earl.

And Marian shrank back from his gaze as if to conceal the real pang that the tidings gave her.

"May I ask what the sex of this supposed child is?" she asked, at length.

"It was a girl who was born to the Biddulphs," returned Lord Treville, gravely.

And a strange, undefined pang shot through her breast at the reply.

"Then I presume from your lordship's manner that you consider you have some reason to believe this same child is now living and in a position to prove its identity?" she said, hoarsely.

"I do believe she is living. As to the authenticity of any proofs I will not pretend to give an opinion," replied the earl, firmly. "It is enough that I have warned you, Lady Marston, of the facts which have come to my knowledge, and for the rest I must leave it to a superior judgment and more competent tribunal to decide."

Lady Marston gave a half-scornful smile that might perhaps be pardoned under the ordeal which was threatening her.

"Be satisfied, my lord, I shall not contend with the rival if I be once satisfied of the truth of the claim. But I certainly am not disposed to allow the heritage of my ancestors to be usurped by an impostor, even when backed by such powerful influence as Mr. Carow's remarkable legacy to his daughter."

Lord Treville bowed his head and rose to take his departure.

"I have fulfilled a painful duty in giving you this warning, Lady Marston," he said, "and it will be equally distressing to me should I be forced to carry out my brother's solemn behest and find that there is undoubted truth in the claims which might be put forth. At least you will do me the justice to believe that of me, will you not, Lady Marston?"

His stern features relaxed as he spoke, and a gentle smile parted his thin lips as he held out his hand.

Marian tried hard to return it, to speak the belief she could not but entertain, but it was too much for her fortitude. Miserable suspicions, terrible mortifications seemed to stare her in the face as she listened to the earnest words. She said, coldly:

"I am bound to believe you, my lord, but I cannot promise to endorse your opinions, even if satisfactory to yourself."

She rang a bell to summon the domestic to conduct her unwelcome visitor from the house.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

Oh, if the selfish knew how much they lost,
What would they not endure
To imitate as far as in them lay
Him who his wisdom and his power employs
In making others happy?

"REALLY, mamma, you were very silly about that girl Cora," said Trissa Digby, one morning, throwing down the morning paper. "Look here at the advertisement offering a reward and earnestly entreating her to make herself known to her friends, since some very important and advantageous information awaits her. Only fancy if that Mr. Beaulieu were correct, and she turned out to be some one of consequence after all."

Mrs. Digby gave an uneasy laugh.
"You are a romantic child, Trissa. It is very likely that it is a kind of trap such as they sometimes put in to catch people. However, in any case, we might as well take some credit in the affair. Suppose we were to see what can be done in the matter, and send the advertisement to your uncle and the Duke of Dunbar, and even to Lord Belfort's residence, since the whole secret seems to be out now, and there is no doubt she had something to do with the young earl's escape after that duel, which I perfectly remember reading of in the papers. And, besides, I can give a little bit of assistance that no one expects, by giving up this little bundle which I very much doubt she has missed and which seems to me very much like a foreign chain that would be fastened round a child by some Indian nurse or other."

And she took from her pocket a tiny bag that contained a small gold chased fish, something in the shape of a crescent, which bore on it delicately engraved initials that could not be deciphered by the naked eye.

"Dear mamma, where in the world did you find that curious little trifle?" said Trissa, admiringly.

"Oh, in a singular way. It was hanging to a piece of lace that she used, I remember, to wear round her neck like a kind of Elizabethan ruff, and before I gave the lace to the servants to throw away I carefully extracted it from the coils in which it had been caught, and have kept it in my possession. It may turn out well even yet, Trissa, and I am inclined to take action in the matter at once."

"And what good do you suppose can be done with it, mamma?" asked her daughter, incredulously.

"I shall make capital with it, foolish girl," was the reply. "What think you of sending for the Duke of Dunbar and confiding in him all that I know or suspect? It may be that he will have some more information than we possess which will make this trifle of some importance. And, should she turn out to be any one of any consequence, she can scarcely help being kind to you, Trissa, and bringing you forward in every way, because all was put in train here, most certainly, and she would never have even known Lord Treville or any one except that miserable schoolmistress except for me."

There was a loud ring at the bell at the moment, and ere the ladies could exchange hurried conjectures as to the new visitant the Duke of Dunbar was announced.
Mrs. Digby was fully equal to the emergency.
"Ah, your grace is indeed most welcome," she exclaimed, eagerly. "It was but now that I was lamenting my helplessness to act in relation to the remarkable girl who so interested every one who ever was in her society."

"I presume you allude to Miss St. Croix, as to whom an advertisement has appeared which brought me here," said the duke, coldly, responding to the demonstrative attack. "And I certainly came here this morning to endeavour to ascertain through you, Mrs. Digby, where she is likely to be found. It seems to me that you were the last guardian in whose care she was living, and therefore you must know something about her movements."

Perhaps a crimson flush did mantle the lady's cheek as she listened to the last words. But she had been too long accustomed to this species of self-approach to yield to its embarrassment.
"Your grace will excuse my entering into any particulars," she said, deprecatingly, "but there were powerful reasons why I could not preserve the guardianship to which your grace alludes. But my interest in the dear girl is unabated. And I was even now thinking of sending this little but significant trifle to the address mentioned in the advertisement and with it a notification that to the best of my belief Miss St. Croix went from here to France, and that she probably visited while there the home of her girlhood, where she will now be either discovered or some trace found of her movements."

Could anything be more gracious, more kindly than this plausible, softly spoken explanation? At any rate the duke did not outwardly dispute its truth or justice.

any rate the duke did not outwardly dispute its truth or justice.

"I am glad to spare you any such trouble, Mrs. Digby," he said, courteously. "The fact is that, though at present I am bound to strict secrecy, yet some very important interests are at stake in Miss St. Croix's discovery and identification. And if I should be enabled by you to assist in the task you may rely on it, my dear madam, that there will be no lack of gratitude or of reward so far as any means in his power or that of her friends in return."

Mrs. Digby shook her head.

"My dear duke, I have little idea of such selfish hopes. However, I am thankful to make over this part of my duty to you. Only let the dear girl know that I have not forgotten her, and that my earnest wishes are for her welfare and happiness."

The duke bowed courteously, albeit a slight smile shined more of scorn than gaiety in it did not altogether respond to the lady's wishes.

"You may have the pleasure of knowing that in all probability your wishes will be fulfilled, even more brilliantly than you perhaps anticipate, Mrs. Digby. Miss St. Croix's destiny will indeed be a remarkable contrast to the humiliations and troubles of her early life."

And with a somewhat more familiar farewell the duke took his leave.

"Mamma, wherein the world does all this mean? Who can Cora be?" said Trissa, curiosity for the moment overcoming any other feeling.

But the mother did not reply.

She was suffering the pang of deserved and gnawing remorse, and alarm for the golden chances she had thrown away in her short-sighted jealousy and pride.

"Nonsense, it seems to me that you ought to go over and call on Lady Marston," said Rupert to his young wife, as they and the earl were sitting at breakfast a few days after Lord Treville's visit to Biddulph Castle. "It is only a proper attention to her, after her loss, and—"

"And I suppose you want me to wear black and shed tears on the occasion?" returned the young Lady Carow, angrily. "You are exceedingly considerate for every one but me, Rupert, but it never occurs to you to consult my wishes or happiness. It is a great pity you did not marry Lady Marian, if you are so anxious about her. Do you not think he is very unkind and thoughtless, uncle?" she went on, turning to her father-in-law with a child-like pettishness; "I'm sure I have not had a single pleasure since I was married, and I thought it would be nothing else when I was once out of that horrid, stupid place."

Lord Treville had shown unusual patience with the wayward, spoilt child he had unwittingly forced on his only son. But surely there must have been some deeper reason than a latent self-reproach for his promotion of her cause on the present occasion.

"I think it had better be deferred, at any rate, Rupert," he said, quietly. "It would be an embarrassing and very unnecessary trial for your wife, under all the circumstances."

"As you please, my lord," interrupted Rupert, impatiently. "It is perhaps as well that you should undertake the management of the wife you chose for me; you are better accustomed to deal with the Carows than I have been."

The reproach was repeated as soon as spoken, for it was but the fretful exasperation of his impetuous temper on seeing the fairest prospects blighted and embittered by his own blind folly.

Cora St. Croix and Marian Biddulph were indeed more than avenged in the heart canker which had poisoned the happiness of the new-found heir of the Carows.

Netta's lovely face flushed with some of the spirit of her race, and her next words might have proved that she was not altogether to be despised as a fretful child, but had some of a woman's jealous pride in her composition.

But at the moment the door of the breakfast-room opened, and a servant announced, in a rather perplexed tone:

"The Countess of Belfort and the Duke of Dunbar are in the library, my lord, and wish to see you on important business."

The party exchanged looks of astonishment that for the moment overcame every other feeling.

"Lady Belfort!" exclaimed Netta, eagerly. "Good Heavens, Rupert, why, surely Ernest is not married. Who in the world can it be? Shall I go and see?"

And she hastily sprang up to fulfil her intention, but Lord Treville interposed sternly.

"Certainly not, Netta. It is perhaps some mistake, but certainly you are not the person to ascertain who and what is the business of Lord Belfort's wife."

And putting her back from the door, which she had by this time reached, he passed through, and closed it determinately behind him, while Rupert and his wayward wife were too much engrossed by

a bewildering curiosity and surprise to indulge in the biokering irritability that too often occupied the most private hours of their early wedded life.

Lord Treville opened the library door with no little trepidation at the extraordinary advent of so unknown a visitor.

But when his eyes met the high-bred and interesting but decidedly middle-aged face and features of the lady by whom the Duke of Dunbar was standing he was still more mystified than before.

"Did I understand aright? Is this lady the Countess of Belfort?" he asked, in some astonishment of the duke as they exchanged greetings.

His grace smiled involuntarily at the question, though there were too weighty interests at stake for mirth.

"Certainly, Lord Treville, with the slight addendum that she is the mother and not the wife of the young fellow who has been under a cloud so long," he replied. "But that will not at all affect the business which has brought us hither, since the unlucky quarrel between him and your brother has been not only long settled but also some grave doubts cast upon the real cause of Mr. Carew's death. And, allow me to say, that the circumstances of the case are of a nature that will scarcely bear publicity," he added, significantly, glancing at Lady Belfort's pale, quiet face.

"That may be a matter of opinion, your grace. In any case I have hitherto abstained from active measures to avenge my brother's death," was the reply. "May I ask you to come to the point? Is it to insure her son's safety that this lady, so long supposed to be dead, has reappeared?"

"Not altogether," said the countess, in her sweet, half-foreign tones. "It was unless selfish business that I have made the exertion of coming hither, my lord. And yet it was closely connected with your deceased brother and the presumed cause of his death. I allude to the orphan he adopted, to Cora St. Croix, Lord Treville."

"And what of her, what of her?" returned the earl, impatiently, for he had a strange feeling of annoyance connected with the young creature whom he had desired to claim as his own.

"Simply that some very remarkable events have transpired connected with her," said the duke, interposing. "There is every reason to suppose, Lord Treville, that the young lady in question is heirress to an old name and large estates, that she is the rightful possessor of a peerage in her own right, which is now held by another. And since your son was the first agent in rescuing her from her hopeless captivity, and you had much share in her after misfortunes and anxieties, I thought it by no means an inappropriate or needless ceremony to apprise you of the facts we have discovered, and invite your assistance in tracing them to the fountain head."

And as the earl somewhat quailed under the earnest, determined look and tone of the visitor, the gentler tones of the lady interposed.

"Lord Treville, there may be sad and painful memories connected with the past, which time alone can fully heal, but at least you will have cause for congratulation in the remembrance that your son rescued from misery and savage ignorance the heiress of a noble name, the orphan of those scarcely more to be pitied than the foundling babe of their hasty and clandestine marriage."

And as Lord Treville's features gradually relaxed and his eyes asked eagerly for farther explanations, the unexpected guests began in more kindly and trusting manner to give the details of the strange assertion thus hazarded by the long-absent mother of Ernest Belfort.

CHAPTER LXIX.

Thou youngest virgin, daughter of the skies,
Made in the last promotion of the blest,
Waste palms new plucked from Paradise
In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
Hear then a mortal raise thy praise rehearse
And straight with inborn vigour on the wing
Like mounting larks in the new morning sing.

LADY MARSTON was indulging in dreams, not of the future, but of the past, that swept over her brain like the resistless current of a river.

All the experience of her life, the tales of other days, the disappointments and mistakes, the fears and warnings which had attended it, passed like a panorama before her mind. And at length a powerful influence induced her to leave her favorite apartments and view the chambers which had been the scene of Ernest Belfort's concealment and of Cora's.

She hastened to the lonely rooms and, after a moment's pause ere she unlocked the door, turned the key and entered.

A strange chill, that might be a presentiment of evil or a remembrance of the past, thrilled through her as she passed through the rooms, which had not been visited since that memorable episode.

There stood the pictures which Cora had paused by and studied till surprised by Mrs. Aston in her solitary examination of their features, and Lady Marston stood before the beautiful portrait that had

attracted the fair fugitive's attention, and studied its lineaments with a new and unaccountable fascination. It was not only its beauty—that was rare indeed, and undoubted in its charms—but the great interest that it excited in the young countess was the resemblance it bore to one whom she could never forget, who had been the unconscious but most dangerous rival of her life—the obscure and yet all-powerful Cora St. Croix. It was like, strangely like to the orphan foundling.

There were the same high-bred features, the same graceful contour of limb in both, though perhaps the living ideal was more decidedly perfectly lovely than the portrait. But Lord Treville's hints seemed to invest this picture with a yet more anxious excitement.

Lady Marian trembled as she gazed with a terror which she could not define.

"This suspense is dreadful," she murmured. "Oh, if I did but know, if I could but ascertain the real truth, I should be happy then!"

Daring words—more daring thoughts. It almost seemed like tempting her fate, though many a one had believed and acted on that same belief as Marian, under like pressure of suspense.

She had scarcely breathed the words when a loud sound of carriage wheels, and a ringing of the gate bell, made her start like some guilty criminal who fears detection in his sins. And though she stood for the moment hesitating and puzzled by the unwonted sound since the deep mourning of her late seclusion the next instant she flew to the door, and, hastily looking it behind her, passed rapidly to her own more immediate domain.

There was, however, a messenger in waiting for her there, in the shape of her faithful Aston, who met her with pale cheeks and lips that quivered with agitation.

"Ah, my lady, my dear lady," she said, hurriedly, "prepare yourself for something startling. There are those here who would not come without some weighty reason. There is my Lord Treville, and the duke, and, dear lady, there is Lord Belfort, and—Miss St. Croix, and another lady, all arrived in two carriages, desiring to see you on important business; and they said I might be with you, and that I might perhaps be wanted. Dear, dear child—for I love you as one, my lady—take heart and courage if wanted, and remember that you are of the old family, if not of the direct line, and prove yourself a true Biddulph in any emergency."

Perhaps the encouragement was more alarming than the actual trial could have proved, but at least it prepared the heiress in some degree for the impending ordeal, and she paused for a brief moment to recover calmness and strength ere she prepared to join her guests.

Aston poured out a glass of water, in which she mingled some restoring essence, and then, respectfully opening the door, she allowed her lady to pass through, and followed her to the library, where the group of strange and familiar visitors were waiting.

Certainly if Marian Biddulph had ever looked worthy of her birth it was at that moment when with lofty grace she saluted the two noblemen who first advanced to meet her, and then with a half-questioning, colder air turned to Cora and the unknown lady who accompanied her.

"I suppose I shall soon learn to what I owe this unwonted number of visitors?" she said, with a kind of courteous sarcasm in her manner. "I can scarcely suppose it is merely a mark of friendly attention, Lord Treville," she added, turning to the elder of the gentlemen, who were standing with evident embarrassment in their look and mien.

The earl hesitated, for a brief moment, then he appeared to take a more decided mode of action, and his tone was firm and distinct as he replied:

"You are right, my dear young lady; it is no common and in many respects no pleasant business that brings us here to-day. But I believe it is no kindness to give you the slow torture of suspense, and I will at once come to the point—at least if you wish it," he added, rather deprecatingly.

"I do. Please be candid and brief," she said. "And, first, who is that lady?" she continued, pointing to the elder companion of Cora, who was seated on a sofa, somewhat in the background.

"It is the mother of Lord Belfort, who has for so many years lived in the East that she has been considered almost as dead," was the reply. "But it is not exactly with her that we have at this moment to deal," he hastily resumed. "You will remember that I gave you a warning not long since that a child of Philip Biddulph and Ida Merriek had been discovered and that little doubt existed of her identity. The facts are, I may say now, undoubtedly established, and the child in question is therefore, in the right of descent, heiress to the title and the estates you have for some time enjoyed. It is a painful reverse of fortune, my dear young lady, but one that at least is not attended with the slightest disgrace or reproach, and I trust there is an even brighter and higher destiny in store for you."

Marian's lips were white now, but her voice was steady in its intonation as she replied:

"Who is my rival—where are the proofs, Lord Treville?"

The nobleman gave a somewhat sad smile.

"I imagine you will not be at any great loss to suspect at any rate the identity of the new relative just given to you. Cora, my dear, come forward, and let me present you to your cousin as the daughter of the deceased Mr. and Mrs. Biddulph, and the consequent Countess of Marston."

Cora advanced with a shrinking timidity that she had never displayed as the obscure foundling of the wreck.

"Can you pardon, can you think kindly of me?" she said. "I have suffered so much, and it is my only crime that I have survived to dispossess you of your position, dear lady."

Marian's heart did perhaps somewhat soften to the sweet, humble tone and mien of the new rival to her throne, but it was perhaps too hard a trial to endure with patience.

"I must first have proofs—proofs," she said, in a strange, rasping voice. "Then it will be time enough to speak of pardon and friendship. Lord Treville, you or the duke will perhaps kindly enlighten me as to the evidence of this singular tale."

"It is undoubted enough, dear Marian, if I may be allowed to call you so," interposed the duke, "and if you will permit me to act as one who feels a deep and tender interest in your dignity and happiness I would earnestly counsel you to make no vain and useless resistance to the painful truth. The simple facts are these. It has been most undeniably proved that Philip Biddulph and his wife sailed with their child in the 'Sea Gull,' which was wrecked off Santa Cruz, and all on board save one infant child lost. And, as if in anticipation of what did in truth happen, Mrs. Biddulph, or the nurse, actually sewed up in the child's clothes the certificate of its birth, and a copy of the certificate of their own marriage. And these clothes which were brought home by Lord Carew, and which seemed to contain no proof at all of the infant's birth, did in fact afford the last evidence of her identity. Besides which there are many minor proofs in the shape of jewelled trinkets, and the remarkable resemblance of the young lady to the portrait of her mother in the very rooms where she was instrumental in concealing and saving Lord Belfort."

"And which, I doubt not, was one charm that unconsciously attracted my poor brother," observed Lord Treville, "since he was I know one of the victims to Miss Merriek's fatal beauty, and her disappearance was perhaps the most severe and lasting blow of his life, and one that laid the foundation of his future misery and death."

Lord Belfort looked pleadingly at Marian. "Dear Marian, if you knew, if you could but guess the pain and grief that the remembrance of the past, and the true sympathy for your unmerited wrongs cause to my heart, you would not judge me harshly. There is but one who has no cause for remorse—save indeed this noble girl—and he perhaps may plead more boldly and successfully for your gracious pardon for the pain thus unwittingly given to you by our agency. Cora, will you join your entreaties to the duke's?"

"Cora!" she repeated, "Cora! Then I presume she is your betrothed wife, Lord Belfort?" said Marian, haughtily.

The young nobleman shuddered his head sadly.

"Not so, Marian, not so. Even when she was in apparent obscurity and loneliness Cora St. Croix was too far above me in all that is the true nobility for me to hope for a reciprocation of the love she then won. And now, when she has every imaginable claim to the homage of the highest and most gifted, how can I even dare to dream of such undesired bliss?"

There was a slight murmur, a rustle of female garments, a low noise that was scarcely audible save to him whom it most nearly concerned.

And then a bright flash of sunshine lighted up Lord Belfort's face. For there had been a hand laid lightly on his arm—a pleading, unmistakable look in the beautiful, expressive eyes, and a sweet voice had whispered:

"Ernest, I owe all to you. Will you destroy the happiness that you have tried so hard to insure?"

And Ernest Belfort presently laid the hand of his betrothed in that of the mother who had already learned to love the fair girl as a dear daughter.

The Duke of Dunbar had comprehended the whole little scene, and there was perhaps a secret pang in his own heart that needed a healing balm, for his next words were broken and subdued as he addressed the pale, o-devant countess.

"Marian, since it seems that one can venture to make known in public a cherished and deep desire may I not in my turn ask of you the boon that you once refused me when I confess I had asked it in selfish and unthinking regard to my own interest and convenience? Now it is otherwise. I have been taught by that noble girl, who is now rewarded by

her deserts, what love and truth and generosity mean. And if you will listen to my true and earnest vows, we may know happiness, Marian, such as would never have been ours in the days of unbroken prosperity and pride. In the presence of those most interested in our—in your fate, dearest, I ask you to be my honoured and cherished bride."

Marian's answer need scarcely be made more audible to the public than it was to the ears of all save the suitor who pleaded for her response. But that she appreciated the disinterested truth of her old lover may be inferred from the undoubted fact that two brilliant weddings were solemnized in one day in the parish church of Biddulph Castle and Carew Manor, and that the brides were Cora, Countess of Marston, and Marian Biddulph.

Aston remained in her old capacity and in a seventh heaven of happiness at serving once more the old family in the person of the child of her favourite, Mr. Philip.

Rupert and Netta were sufficiently punished for their capricious selfishness and distrust by the discord and misery of their ill-assorted and childless union, and the bitter contemplation of Ernest and Cora's bright happiness.

Trissa Digby and her mother jangled and quarrelled as to their respective shares in the ill-treatment of the embryo countess till the young lady was induced to run off with the younger son of a spendthrift baronet who had won on her thoughtless nature by his handsome person and apparent devotion to her thoughtless self.

And Ernest Belfort preserved untouched to the last hour of his life as a sacred memento the old apartments where he had been rescued from his impending fate by the heroism of his noble wife; while the children with whom they were blessed were taught the meaning of the annual visit that was paid to the half-ruined wing on the anniversary of their father's escape. But when once Cora had gained the firm footing of her wedded happiness her courage and patience were no more tried by the Shifting Sands of her early and changing fortunes.

THE END.

WHO IS HE?

By the Author of "Lord Dane's Error," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"VERNER RUBLE, the man you so positively assert to be Maurice Champion, has gone to Breulau in search of your lost boy," repeated Lord Champion, in a thrilled voice.

Lady Isabel grew suddenly very calm. She looked at Lord Champion a moment steadily.

"Is that true?" she asked, in a strange voice. "Is he not, then, utterly dead to the voice of nature? You say, my lord, the man I assert to be Maurice Champion. He is Maurice Champion. Though his horrible coldness, his frightful, carefully studied strangeness toward me, treating me always with superhuman fidelity as the wife of another man, has often made me wonder if it was not all an awful dream, it has never made me imagine for one instant that he is not himself. He may deceive the whole world beside with his incredible acting—me he cannot blind."

"And yet he is changed in outward appearance, Isabel, you will acknowledge that. Six years must alter a man."

"He is fearfully changed—more inwardly than outwardly—and yet the semblance of the lofty, pure and loving soul I loved remains."

She ceased abruptly, whiter than snow; her eyes, wild with agony, darted affrighted glances from side to side like those of a hunted doe.

"Alas, alas!" she murmured. "What do I say—he lofty, true, loving? he? My lord, I have such dreadful thoughts sometimes. Do you think an emergency could possibly arise cruel and terrible enough to compel a man to sell his wife?"

Lord Champion stared.

"Isabel," he said, "I cannot in justice to you discuss such absurdities. This man of whom we are speaking has gone now to look for your son."

"And his," my lady almost shrieked, in her anguish.

Lord Champion drew a deep, troubled breath. He was not prepared to tell Lady Isabel all his suspicions, nor all that had passed between himself and young Ruble. His judgment was opposed to such a course, and he feared the exciting effect upon her of confessing his vague and improbable suppositions concerning the man she so firmly believed to be her lost husband.

"He has gone to look for your son, Isabel," he said, slowly. "Listen to me—you can hardly doubt that I am your true friend. You know that I would give my title to see Sir Robert's villainous protégé driven from the lofty place he has usurped. I have sought the acquaintance of this man called Verner

Ruble; I have endeavoured to become intimate with him for your sake, and I have succeeded in a measure. Every hour that I have known him he has won upon me; I love him like a brother this moment; I confess to you there is a mystery about him that I have not yet been able to solve. But I would stake my life that that mystery, wild and improbable as it is, involves him in no dishonour. He has gone in search of Hugh, as your son, for your sake. He has no fancies concerning the boy. If he is his child, I swear to you, Isabel Champion, he does not know it. Can you not, in the face of all the strange things that have happened to you, credit the possibility that Verner Ruble may resemble your husband to an incredible degree, and yet not be he? Whoever and whatever he is—mark me—he adores you. He worships you. It is you alone that he thinks of in his search for Hugh. He will find him too; I feel that he will. There was that in his handsome, sad face that was like a prophecy of success in the mission he had undertaken."

Lady Isabel smiled with terrible bitterness.

"He is the prince of hypocrites, my lord. I will not trust him. To you I commit the fate of my son. At your hands I will require him in the day when we all are judged for the deeds done here. Save him and Heaven will bless you beyond most. Lose him, and from the grave already dug for me I will come to haunt you."

The white, unearthly beauty of her face shone a moment before him, and then, before he could speak, she had unlocked the door and flitted like an unhappy spirit through it. He hastened after her, but she was already gone down the long, softly carpeted passage and staircase noiseless as a ghost, and as swift. The outer door clanged behind her while he was looking, and he barely reached it in time to see her vanish inside a hired carriage which was waiting, and be driven swiftly away. Lord Champion paced the floor of his morning room long. His looks were dark and troubled.

"There can be nothing in it," he said, at last, to reassure himself, and throw off the awful forebodings induced in spite of Lady Isabel's gloomy prophecies concerning her own fate, but he was not able to feel at ease about her, absurd as seemed the supposition that any harm could come to her in the way she apprehended. His experience of Sir Robert, not to mention that other, had been of a sort to convince him that he was thoroughly selfish and unprincipled; but that any of them would dare to proceed to that extreme apprehended by Lady Isabel he could not believe.

He went into the city and spent the best part of the day in conferring with a shrewd lawyer friend of his—a man who had really pretended to retire from practice on the score of health, and because he had made money enough, but could not keep altogether away from the charmed locality of the Temple and Lincoln's Inn.

This lawyer friend laughed at the idea that any violence could or dare approach so popular, beautiful, and well-known a woman as Lady Isabel Champion. He was not a romantic man. He humoured Lord Champion in the discussion of Lady Isabel's singular circumstances, but he regarded those circumstances as singular only in Lord Champion's sight, and himself secretly believed, what very many in London did, that Lady Isabel was insane, and imagined all these strange things. There was a horrible whisper indeed abroad that my lady had herself destroyed her boy, and that she, better than any one else, could have told at the time how poor Mrs. Cawley came by her unhappy death.

This lawyer friend of Lord Champion's did not believe that young Hugh was alive, but he was willing to humour his lordship in the fancy, and rather enjoyed speculating upon the possibilities of such a circumstance.

It was long past any reasonable calling hour when Lord Champion quitted Temple Bar at last. He was still terribly uneasy. He had not grown any less so in spite of all the arguments of his friend, the lawyer; but though he had not acted upon his presentiments, as he named them afterwards when the worst had come and it was too late to profit by their warning, he could not shake off the vague depression which clung to him, and increased every hour, until he yielded to his promptings, and went to Plantagenet Square. This was not, however, until the morning succeeding Lady Isabel's visit.

He found the house shut up, blinds closed, and the furniture being cased in brown holland.

It was the height of the London season, and, without sign or warning, Sir Robert Calthorpe and his wife, the soi-disant Maurice Champion and Lady Isabel, had gone to Kirston Wood.

They had left town by the night express, the porter informed his lordship.

"If I had done my duty yesterday I should have been in time," mused my lord, bitterly, as he drove

away from Plantagenet Square; "but I'll follow them. Heaven grant I may be in time! for now I believe that they mean some wicked business. I shall invite myself to Kirston, and I shall stay there in spite of them till something happens to take Lady Isabel out of their power."

He went home and wrote some letters, which he left for his valet to post and then follow him.

There was an express train at one o'clock, which he meant to take, and did.

He reached the station nearest Kirston in the night, and had to wait for morning before he went to the Wood.

He discovered before he got there, however, that he had come on a fruitless errand. No one was at Kirston but the servants left in charge.

Horrible forebodings assailed him when he learned this.

Where should he look for those he was in search of next?

The wicked trio whom Lady Isabel had such cause to fear (for more cause indeed than even she suspected) had not come to Kirston. They had gone instead to another place belonging to Lady Isabel, and situated in the extreme south of Wales.

Lady Isabel had objected to going, but without effect. She had indeed been given to understand pretty distinctly that unless she went willingly she would be drugged and compelled to go.

Her only choice being between these alternatives, she consented to the journey, though horribly sure that some fearful fate awaited her at Lludwyn Manor, the place in Wales. She hoped that she might be able to escape on the way, or, at least, to interest some one in her cause.

But Sir Robert secured a carriage to themselves, and whenever they were compelled to leave this he and Lady Calthorpe, with Crawley, permitted no one to approach the hapless lady near enough for any private communication.

Twice Lady Isabel appealed loudly and vehemently to strangers for protection, once when they changed carriages and again when they finally left the train to take horse conveyance to Lludwyn.

On each occasion the hard, adamant self-possession of her guardians had been too much for her. The first time Lady Calthorpe merely touched her forehead significantly, and glanced with affected compassion from Lady Isabel to Sir Robert and Crawley, who, readily taking the cue, sadly shook their heads and pretended to speak soothingly to Lady Isabel, while they in reality muttered such horrible threats as made her blood chill in her veins—the more so as she lifted her scared eyes and beheld the gentlemen to whom she had appealed in her desperation smiling to each other with a half-contemptuous significance, it seemed to her in her proud, deeply stung sensitiveness.

The second time there was no one beside themselves, except the station-master and two of his assistants, stolid-looking Welshmen all three, whom my lady felt it was useless to appeal to before she uttered a word of her frantic adjuration. Nevertheless she spoke, for she felt that this might be her last chance to escape from her enemies, whose deadly purpose she believed she had watched grow more hideously to view with every step of the journey.

Unknown to her, Crawley had previously dispatched to Lludwyn two of his own creatures. These had prepared the people at the station for the advent of the crazed creature they represented Lady Isabel to be. Consequently all her entreaties and appeals fell on dulled and leaden ears.

Crawley's men had come from the Manor with a large, lumbering, old-fashioned vehicle which they called a carriage. It was closed all around with thick curtains of leather and silk, and looked mouldy. The smell of it was like a grave, Lady Isabel said to herself with a shudder as she clambered into the funeral-looking concern and sat down. Sir Robert, Lady Cattie and Crawley followed her, the dismal, black curtains were dropped, and the vehicle started.

Though there was a small window at the front and back the interior of the carriage was very dark. Lady Isabel could barely discern the white and cruel faces of her companions.

They all sat for the most part silent or broke into spasmodic attempts at gaiety that sounded false and forced, and chilled Lady Isabel more than their silence.

My lady possessed an uncommonly clear brain, ready wits and a courageous soul. As she felt the meshes of that dark web in which she was tangled drawing tighter her energies seemed to strengthen even as her terror grew.

"What are you going to do with me, Lady Cattie, when you get me to Lludwyn?" she demanded, with hardihood, of Lady Calthorpe.

Lady Cattie smiled sweetly, while Sir Robert dropped his eyes and Crawley stared at the window opposite.

"We are going to make you well, dear," Lady Cattie said, in her silky voice. "The air of Lluddwyn will cure you we hope. It is so far removed from all communication with or disturbance from the outer world that you will have ample leisure, my dear, to recover the tone of your mind. Your nerves need strengthening. You will look upon life very differently when you have been at Lluddwyn a while."

"You mean that I shall not look upon life at all," answered Lady Isabel, her beautiful eyes flashing daringly in the faces of the three; "you mean that I shall die at Lluddwyn, but, if I do, let me warn you that you will every one hang for it. I have friends in London who know what cause, I believe, I have to fear you. They have looked upon my terrors as mere imagination till now. Now, if I die, they will see that I was right after all, and I hope and believe that you will all three be punished as you deserve to be. I could almost be willing to die to bring about so happy and deserved a result for you."

Sir Robert whitened, even in that light, as my lady spoke. Her prophecy made his blood curdle unpleasantly.

Crawley laughed harshly. He had no serious fears for his part, for he meant to vanish from the country the moment he got his money. But he paled, notwithstanding, at the vehemence and vindictiveness with which Lady Isabel spoke. He shrank involuntarily from the desperate blaze in her large, fearless black eyes.

Lady Cattie alone was entirely self-possessed. If ever the evil one entered a beautiful human form, he possessed the soul of this woman. Ever since she could remember, Lady Cattie had hated Lady Isabel. She gloated now upon those signs of terror which she fancied she detected in her. She laughed softly. Lady Cattie Calthorpe always laughed most sweetly when she felt most deadly.

"My dear Isabel," she said, "the nearer we get to Lluddwyn the surer I am that Lluddwyn air will be good for you. We gave out before we left London that your mind was in such a distracted state that we feared you would destroy yourself. If anything should happen to you it will be accepted by all as something you have done to yourself."

Sir Robert shuddered violently, and caught his wife by the arm.

"You fend," he said, in a horrible husky whisper, "what do you mean? don't you know she may escape us yet?"

Lady Isabel looked at Lady Calthorpe with glittering yet steadfast eyes. Her lips were white but untrembling, and she made no answer to those dreadful words which Lady Calthorpe had just uttered, but only sat and looked at her.

By this time they were at Lluddwyn, and Lady Isabel, after being assisted from the mouldy old carriage, saw before her the low, wide, time-stained, stone front of the Manor.

A black circle of Norway firs begirt the mansion, the walls behind these looked black with age, and the windows were few, small, and set in diamond panes deep in the stonework. A gloomy avenue, marshalled by the same dismal sentinels, led to the main doorway.

Not a creature was in sight save two lean, lank, long, hungry-eyed and red-jawed hounds, who threw up their heads and howled such a horrible, unearthly welcome that even Lady Cattie gasped her small white teeth at them and muttered:

"If I stay here long those creatures shall have their howling stopped once for all."

The inside of the Manor was not less dreary than the exterior.

The house had come to Lord Champion, Lady Isabel's father, through a remote relative. Neither he nor his daughter had ever visited it till now. It had been left to the occupancy of bats, and owls, and creeping creatures for years and years. The flagstones in the wide entrance hall were damp and slimy; a chill as of the grave met the new comers.

Crawley shivered with superstitious discomfort and dread and swore audibly. Then he put both his doubled hands to his mouth and halloed. A hundred echoes answered him, and the entrance hall being open to the roof, an owl, disturbed in his daytime nap by the noise, came flopping down, amidst shrill and loud, inhuman screams that made Crawley curse again.

In the midst, a little old woman, wrinkled like an ogress, suddenly appeared.

Lady Isabel stared at her in wonder despite her fears.

She wore a flaring scarlet silk petticoat, with a long bodice of lace and velvet. She had a ruff at her neck, her hair was dressed high and ornamented with flowers, and she had satin shoes on her feet with tiny red heels at least three inches high, which clicked like sharp teeth on the stones as she hobbled towards them and said, in a sharp, piping voice, as if she was calling to the owls on the roof:

"This way, my lords and ladies, this way, if you please."

She threw open a door at one side of the damp hall with a flourish and a deep, old-fashioned courtesy. The cheery, chirping blaze of a fire greeted them as they passed through, and the little old woman vanished again with the shrill warning of

"Supper in ten minutes, my lords and my ladies—supper in ten minutes, or we'll all go to smash together."

Sir Robert looked at Crawley inquiringly, while the ladies went to the fire and loosened the strings of their hats.

Crawley scowled. "She was an actress once. She is crazy now, but she is harmless, except with some one who knows how to stir the madness in her."

His wicked eyes flashed furtively in Lady Isabel's direction as he spoke, and Sir Robert whitened and shook himself with a shudder.

Lady Cattie, who sat near enough to Crawley to hear what he said, laughed aloud.

Lady Isabel did not look up. She sat staring fixedly in the fire, the lines about her beautiful mouth deepening fearfully, the despair and desperation growing in her great, solemn black eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DINNER was served just as the darkness fell.

The little old lady in the scarlet dress and velvet bodice was the only attendant.

Lady Isabel watched the rest, and partook of nothing that they had not eaten of first, at which caution Lady Cattie sneered openly and looked at Crawley and then at the little ogress in her scarlet dress and high-heeled shoes.

After dinner the ogress announced that she would take them to their sleeping-rooms, and Lady Isabel went first.

Crawley looked up as the door closed behind the two with an angry smile.

"Did you ever see Fatima, the actress?" he asked. He laughed again as Sir Robert started at the question.

"That woman, so hideous now," he went on, "was once Fatima, the actress. She was called Fatima the Beautiful sometimes, but unfortunately for her she had a heart, and she killed the man who won it, because she was jealous of him; and then she went crazy. Did you see how her horrible little dancing eyes glared as she looked at Lady Isabel? She thinks she is the woman who stole her lover's heart from her. I'm glad I'm not in Lady Isabel's skin tonight."

And the ugly smile deepened on his ghastly lips. Sir Robert stared, his eyes dilating frightfully, his ghastly lips falling apart of themselves with horror.

Lady Cattie nodded her pretty, wicked little head viciously, but her face paled.

"It's elegantly contrived," she said, in her silky voice; "elegantly. You deserve more than ten thousand pounds if all goes well, you charming Champion."

Crawley did not answer. With his head slightly bent he was listening with all his might.

In spite of themselves, Sir Robert and Lady Calthorpe listened also.

A curious, shuffling sound came suddenly to the ears of all three. Then a door clashed to with a crash, as if the very walls of the Manor were tumbling down.

An awful, a seemingly interminable silence followed. A ghastly, blue, corpse-like look crept over the three listening faces. They avoided each other's eyes, and even Lady Cattie shrank in her chair till her teeth chattered.

Sir Robert started up suddenly with fright.

"I'm going back to London!" he cried, frantically. "I never consented! I will deny it while I have breath! I will have you denounced as a murderer, Crawley—I swear that I will! I will swear that I knew nothing of it."

He was making for the door with frantic gesticulations when Lady Cattie darted in front of him with menacing white face and contemptuous, flame-like eyes.

"Idiot!" she said, with a hiss, "go back and sit down in your chair, or it will be worse for you. How could you go to London at this time of night? Tell me that, will you? Do you want to set everybody staring and pointing their fingers at you?"

Sir Robert stopped. He was breathing so hard he might have been heard outside in the passage. Lady Cattie laid her hand on his arm.

"To-morrow," she said, soothingly, but with a fearful backward glance, as if some poor, murdered ghost might be there to hear—"to-morrow we will return to London, and leave our poor, dear Maurice here with his sweet wife. I am sure she will recover her mind in this delightful solitude."

Sir Robert gasped as if for breath, and let her lead him back to his chair.

Suddenly a fearful scream broke the appalling stillness. A chorus of yells and shrieks followed, enough to rouse the dead. There was a rush as of many steps outside.

Crawley leapt to his feet with a horrible imprecation.

"What shall we do?" he cried. "She has got away somehow, and is coming to us for protection."

Lady Cattie showed her teeth like a tigress.

"She won't get it then," she said. "Hist, come this way. Here is a door. Come, come."

She laid her hand, as she spoke, upon the door in question. It yielded to her touch, and all three passed through, closing it behind them and then stopping where they were, for the most intense darkness prevailed here, and without a light they would none of them advance a step. They covered close to the shut door instead, listening, yet so appalled and thrilled that they could almost hear each other's hearts beat. They heard a door open and shut, and then on the bare floor of the room they had just left sounded the sharp click of the ogress's pointed high heels.

A cold thrill ran through the listeners as they waited again. What made the old woman so still?

Presently they opened the door again and crept in, unable longer to endure the suspense.

Fatima was crouching before the dying fire with her red silk petticoat drawn partly over her head. She never stirred till they had come quite close to her, then she moved a little, and a sharp stiletto-like knife fell with a ringing sound upon the stone hearth. The brightness of this blade was obscured in places with dark spots, which drew the eye in a sort of involuntary fascination.

Lady Cattie was the first one to rally from the spell and take up her part of the farce it had been tacitly agreed should be played.

She shook the crouching old woman roughly.

"What have you been at?" she demanded. "What are you doing with a knife? Where is Lady Isabel?"

The ogress looked up and showed a scowling, brooding visage.

"It's the knife I killed Pero with," she said, with a horrible frown. "I kept it for her. I should have killed her with it too, but Pero came himself and held my hand."

The three wicked ones looked at each other.

Lady Cattie snatched up the knife and examined it.

"Bah!" she cried, throwing it down again in a rage, "it is nothing but rust. Where is Lady Isabel then, you creature?"

The old woman hobbled to her feet, and threw up her long, flail-like arms.

"She had wings," she shrieked; "she flew away into the darkness—away—away!"

The three wicked faces darkened as they stared at each other.

"She has got away after all," said Lady Cattie.

"She's half-way to the station by this time!" cried Sir Robert.

Crawley muttered an oath, as usual, and darted out of the room.

He knew pretty nearly where to look for the chamber Lady Isabel was to have occupied, and the light flaring out from the open door guided him to it.

My lady's cloak and hat were there, showing that this was the room indeed. My lady herself had vanished.

He waited for no more. Almost flinging himself down the stairs, he shouted hastily for his two creatures—the men already mentioned.

Horses were got out, and he and the two men mounted in wild haste, and rode away toward the railroad. One of the men came back in a few hours; Crawley and the other went on to the station, to watch there.

Lady Cattie was nearly crazy with anger and dismay. She stormed to and fro like a mad woman, and reproached Sir Robert ceaselessly till morning dawned.

Two hours after that Crawley and his man came galloping back. They had waited till the only train due for twelve hours had passed; then they came back to Lluddwyn, resolved to scour all that locality till they found her.

But the morning, the day passed, and they did not find her.

"You and Sir Robert had better go up to London and make inquiries," suggested Crawley. "She might have contrived to get to the next station and taken a train there."

"Yes; that is best," said Lady Cattie. "She would naturally go to London first, because Lord Champion is there."

Sir Robert and she departed accordingly. When they had really gone Fatima came dancing

up to Crawley, her scarlet petticoat spread, her satin toes pirouetting strangely.

"Don't you wish you could find her?" she said.

Crawley swore at her. He had no heart. He only blamed the old woman for not doing the business he had laid out for her to do.

The old woman retreated a little, but continued her queer dancing movements.

"I shall tell you where she is," she squeaked, in her small, piping voice, "and then you will marry her; and they lived happy ever afterwards blessed in each other's affection."

Crawley stared at her, wondering if the odd creature did know.

"Come, aunty," he said, "take me to Lady Isabel and you shall have a new bodice, laced with gold."

"And you'll marry her?" she cried.

"Yes, I'll marry her. Come, now."

The old woman laughed shrilly, and, dancing forward, called:

"Follow me, Sir Knight."

Crawley moved after her incredulously.

She led him to the room apportioned to the Lady Isabel the previous night; then through that by a door none of them had noticed, so like it was to the other dark panelling of the wall. This door was locked, but the little woman had a key, and, throwing the door wide open, ushered him into the next apartment with lavish and crazy flourish.

It was bare and dusty, more forlorn than the rest of the rooms in that dismal house, because it had not been prepared for occupancy.

But Lady Isabel was there. She lay sleeping sweetly as a child upon a purple velvet couch which she had wheeled out from the wall and dusted with the cape of her travelling dress.

It was Fatima's shrill voice which aroused her from those painless slumbers in which she beheld the fond, handsome, lover husband she had lost so many years ago, and was happy with him and little Hugh.

"Here is the prince come to marry you," shrieked Fatima.

Lady Isabel started up wildly.

Crawley stopped short in the doorway struck by a sudden dark idea which he wondered had not come to him before. Sir Robert and Lady Calthorpe were out of the way; for once he could talk and act unhindered by them.

He met Lady Isabel with a hypocritical softness in his wonderfully beautiful face.

"We were most anxious about you," he said, in his smoothest tones. "Sir Robert and Lady Calthorpe have gone to London in search of you."

Lady Isabel did not notice his extended hand. She looked at him distrustfully, and a heavy sigh broke from her oppressed heart.

"And you remain," she said, in a hollow voice, "for what?"

Crawley bent his handsome head again in hypocritical humility.

"Rest first, Lady Isabel," he said, sweetly; "then we will dine. Afterward I will tell you why I stayed."

He ushered her into the next room, where he ordered a fire to be lighted to dispel the uncomfortable dampness.

Lady Isabel was too weary—too nearly ill—to question him. She yielded to the drowsy comfort brought into the room by the blaze upon the hearth. She let Fatima wheel a silken couch stuffed with swan's-down before the fire. She let the odd-ugly old woman loosen her dress with deft fingers and hold the red glass of spiced wine to her lips.

It was hot. She slipped it like one in a dream, drooped back among the silky, down, soft pillows, and was asleep again before the draught was half-swallowed. It was the sleep of utter fatigue and exhaustion. In it she forgot that she had lost her child—that her love, her true husband, was false to her, and she helpless and in the power of a miscreant impostor, who claimed that husband's name and rights.

She did not wake until the following morning. Crawley, though so impatient to carry out the dark idea that had occurred to him when Fatima spoke, would not suffer her to be waked.

She slept until the following morning. A delicious cup of chocolate, a broiled bird, and some snowy rolls awaited her when she awoke.

Fatima was a good cook, and she had taken an extraordinary fancy to my lady.

When she had finished her breakfast she brought her some white, strong wine in a glass, the good properties of which she knew herself.

"Drink," she said, in soft tones for her, "it will make you strong to defy him, and he means mischief. Fatima knows."

Lady Isabel drank the transparent sparkling draught. It acted like magic on her dulled senses. She seemed to fear nothing.

Crawley came.

"My lady," he said, boldly, "you guessed right. We brought you down here to kill you and be done

with the bother; but if you will marry me in good faith, if you will own me honestly as your husband and stand by me, I will save you and never let you regret it."

"You villain," cried my lady, with beautiful flashing eyes. "My husband is alive you know. He may be false to me, but I will never be false to myself. I defy and hate you; do your worst."

Crawley's handsome, cruel face darkened.

"You little guess what that worst may be," he said; "think well, my lady."

"If I think a thousand years, my answer will still be the same," she retorted, contemptuously.

"You think so now," he said, "but wait."

He left her, taking Fatima with him. The door was locked and he had the key.

"She will yield in the end," he said to himself, "and that will be much better than to murder her and only get ten thousand pounds."

He went to my lady again in a few hours. He was afraid Sir Robert and Lady Calthorpe would return before he had made his bargain. Out of that sixty thousand pounds a year income, which would come to Lady Cattie when Lady Isabel was out of the way, he thought he ought to have more than ten thousand pounds.

Lady Isabel met him with a very white face. She thought perhaps he had come to kill her with his own hands. She remembered the evil, disfigured faces of the men who had come for them to the station. She had spent the day praying, expecting that at any moment the door might open and those two come in with knives in their hands. She had almost rather they had come than this villain when she saw who it was. It seemed to her loyal heart almost worse to die by the hand of this black-souled creature, whose perfectly featured face even in this dreadful moment reminded her so fearfully of the husband she had worshipped, and who had so cruelly and barbarously deserted her and sold her to her enemies.

She put her hand vaguely in the bosom of her dress. She had hid there the sharp, stained dagger with which Fatima had slain her false lover. The old woman had furtively passed her that as the last kindness in her power as she was driven out of the room by Crawley.

Crawley's handsome face never looked more wicked and hardened than it did at this moment. He came in and shut the door softly behind him, locking it and withdrawing the key. Never since he had made that daring claim at Kirston had he felt so at his ease as he did now, so free to do whatever his bad heart might prompt him to do.

Sir Robert had always been a restraint upon him, but he should be so no longer. He held his fate in his own hands. Instead of the paltry sum Sir Roger had promised him he meant to have all, and to bribe Sir Robert instead of being bribed by him.

Lady Isabel had risen when he first came in. Now, at something she saw in the bold, dark eyes, she put the chair between her and him with one hand, while she still clenched the other in the bosom of her dress.

How could she ever have imagined his eyes were like Maurice's—his bad, burning eyes, which seemed to flame upon her now with unceasing light?

(To be continued.)

EDITH LYLE'S SECRET.

By the Author of "Daisy Thornton," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE Schuylers all remained at Schuyler Hill that winter, and our little place was the pleasant and gayest for it. Only one sad thing occurred—and that the death of poor Tom, which took place suddenly about Christmas time, when we were hanging our garlands of evergreens in the church and making ready for our annual festival.

I was sitting by Gertrude in the church, working upon the same wreath, when the news was brought to us, and I saw the hot tears, which came with a rush to her eyes, and I knew she was thinking of the hopeless love which had, no doubt, shortened poor Tom's life. He had left a message for her.

"Tell Gertrude," he said to his sister, when the death-damp was on his brow, and his utterance was thick and indistinct, "tell Gertrude I loved her till the last, and blessed her with my dying breath, for she helped make me a man. But for her I should fill a drunkard's grave and meet a drunkard's doom. She warned me of my peril; she led me back from the brink of ruin; and if I am saved, as I hope to be, I shall be a star in her crown of glory, as the sinner whom she converted from his evil ways. Heaven bless her and Godfrey too; they are worthy of each other."

These were Tom's last words, and Gertrude cried as if her heart would break when Rosamond repeated them to her the day after Tom's funeral, sitting in

the very room where he died. They were going away from the Ridge House now, Rosamond said, going to London, and the place was for sale. She wished Godfrey would buy it; she would rather see him and Gertrude there than strangers, who had never known or cared for her and her mother.

The idea of a home of her own was a pleasant one to Gertrude, and a few days after Godfrey rode up to the Ridge to confer with Mrs. Barton. But another had been before him; Mr. Marks, the rector, had bought the place, and some time in February was to take possession. Godfrey's horse never galloped a distance of two miles and a half more swiftly than on that day when his rider was charged with the important news.

"Gertrude, Gertrude, I say, where are you? Look here!" Godfrey exclaimed, as he rushed into the room where she was sitting. "What do you think? The parson has bought Ridge House, and is going to take a wife just before Ash-Wednesday! Think of Alice Creighton being the parson's wife and talking goody to old Mrs. Vandusenbisen!"

It was as Godfrey said, Alice was to be Rev. Mrs. Marks, and live at the Ridge House, which her money bought, and the fitting up of which she came to superintend a few days after the story was out. She had written to me asking permission to stop with us while she remained, and I had given our consent and was expecting the little lady, when both Edith, and Gertrude, and Godfrey begged so hard for her to stop with them that she yielded to their entreaties and went to Schuyler House, where Godfrey nearly teased her life out of her and was far more attentive to her than he had been during the short period of his engagement.

Even Mr. Marks himself was scarcely more interested than Godfrey in the house, which Alice furnished in accordance with her extravagant notions.

"It was not as if she was poor and dependent upon her husband's salary, the whole of which she meant to bestow in charities," she said, and so she made a little palace of a home for her future lord, who assented to whatever she suggested, and seemed so excited and absent-minded—once giving out the hymn on Sunday when he should have given the psalm, and baptizing Mrs. Joel Upham's baby Alice instead of Allen—that we were all glad when toward the last of February a young student from London came to officiate at St. Luke's while the rector was away on very important business!

He was absent nearly two weeks—and came back to us with his bride in the most dashing of outfits—tall ruffs which reached quite to her ears, dresses which trailed at least a yard, sleeveless jackets of every device and colour, and her hair gotten up in a most astonishing manner.

She had given out that she married Mr. Marks and not his people, consequently nothing more must be expected of her as Mrs. Marks than she had been willing to do as Miss Creighton. But besides being naturally kind-hearted, Alice was fond of attending to people's affairs, and she had not been with us a month before she was head and front of the sewing-school for the poor children, and first manager of the Church Home, besides having formed a Temperance Club for the young men of the working class, and established a reading-room for them where they could spend their leisure hours which would otherwise be passed at some public-house.

Money can do almost anything, and as Alice had it in abundance she seemed in a fair way to revolutionize the town; and though she always stood upon her dignity and never approached to anything like familiarity with her husband's parishioners, she was really far more popular and better liked as Mrs. Marks than she had been as Alice Creighton.

Miss Julia Schuyler was married to Mr. Camden—married very quietly one morning at St. Luke's, with only the family and a few friends present at the ceremony; and after they were gone for their tour Godfrey began to talk seriously of a trip to Scotland, and then to the Continent, and, greatly to my surprise and delight, insisted that I should accompany him.

"Gertrude will want some lady to gossip with about the fashions and the people we meet, and then you are great at French and German, and can help a chap out of a scrape when a lot of those foreigners get round him, chattering like magpies."

So I went with them.

Neither Gertrude nor myself had ever been in Scotland before, and we enjoyed our stay immensely, and lingered a long time among the beautiful Highlands, where Walter Scott lives and breathes in every brake and fern and moss-grown rock. Then we had a delightful time at Glenhorpe, Emma's beautiful home, so that it was not until August that we came at last to Alnwick, and stopped at the little inn, called sometimes the "White Swan," and sometimes the "Northumberland Arms," from the fact that it is owned by the duke, whose castle is near by.

Here, as Godfrey said, "we were to hunt up his wife's relations," and so we started one morning on foot across the fields for that cottage among the beather where Godfrey had been before.

I could see that Gertie was a good deal excited and looked pale and nervous as we went slowly along the path and through the woods where the father she had never known had so often been when a boy, and where her mother had once come with a trembling and aching heart.

"There it is—that's it—that low, thatched cottage among those trees," Godfrey cried, as we turned a corner, and saw in the distance a very small and very humble-looking house, with a woman standing in the doorway, shading her eyes with her hands, while she watched our progress with evident curiosity.

"Gertie, ma petite, behold the halls of your ancestors! What do you think of it, my dear, and of your Aunt Jennie, for that's she, and no mistake?" Godfrey continued, playfully.

But Gertie did not answer him, she was too much absorbed in the lowly house and the slatternly-looking woman standing there, whom a nearer approach showed to be barefoot as well as bare armed.

"Oh-h, oh, Godfrey! Let's go back! There must be some mistake!" Gertie gasped out, at last, and Godfrey rejoined:

"Nonsense, there is no mistake. I know her. I've been here before. That's Aunt Jennie, sure! Not a very sweet home picture for a man to contemplate, it is true, but grandmother is different. You will like her, Gertie."

It was kind in him thus to adopt even by name the relatives from whom Gertie shrank, and she felt it to be so, and putting her hand on his arm clung fast to him as he went toward the woman, who had recognized him by this time and started to meet us.

She had not a bad face, nor an ugly face. On the contrary her features were good, and her hair heavy and black, but so tumbled and frowsy, while her skin showed plainly that water to any great amount or frequent intervals was a stranger to it.

She was very glad to see Godfrey, and opening the gate for us shook him warmly by the hand, and then courtesying almost to the ground to Gertie she led the way to the house, where one or two hens were walking about and an invalid goose "was being nursed in a basket of wool. Wiping a chair with her apron, she handed it to Gertie, and motioned me, whom she evidently thought the maid, to a little stool near the door. Godfrey remained standing, and, leaning over Gertie, with his hand upon her shoulder, said to Mrs. Nesbit:

"I have brought my wife to Alnwick to see the castle, and remembering the pleasant old lady, your mother, have come to call upon her. Is she well, and can we see her?"

Jennie's apron was at her eyes as she replied: "Oh, Sir Godfrey" (she called him thus), "mother died last Easter morning, and a sorry time I had with her last illness—up days and nights—to say nothing of the doctor's bill and the wine and the funeral, which took nigh all we had laid up. But I don't mind. She was a good mother to me and the bairns and never had a word agin Nesbit, my husband, when he was at his worst with drink."

"Mrs. Lyle dead! I'm so sorry. It is strange the Macphersons did not tell me," Godfrey said, while Gertie, I fancied, breathed a little more freely, and Jenny Nesbit rejoined with a good deal of spirit:

"The Macphersons is it you mean? Sure, I didn't send them any word. I dinna want 'em here with their pride and ashamed of his own kin. Didn't I write him a letter once askin' him to send some money so that me and my son, Godfrey Schuyler, who, as you remember, was named after you, could go up to his fine place and visit him, and when he never answered my letter didn't I write again and tell him I had scraped enough together to get me a new gown with an overskirt and enough besides to take me to Glenhorpe, and as't him the cheapest way to come? He writ lively then, and said I was on no account to visit him. He was willin' to give us money for his grandmother's sake, he said, but there could be no pleasure in sociable intercourse—they are the two big words—sociable intercourse between our families, and it must not be thought of. His wife was not like me, and though it was not my fault that I was born different I'd better stay at home. He said, too, that they were going away on a tower to the Continent, and he did not know when he would be back. I tell you I was mad and so was Nesbit, and I had a great mind to go anyways to spite him, an' he my own sister's son, and I wantin' so to see the Caledony Canal. But mother took his part, and said he was right. His wife was different every way, and it stood to reason that she'd be ashamed of me as didn't dress nor appear as well as her housemaids, most likely. And so I gave it up, and the first money he sent me after that went back to him

quick as it came; but he sent the next twenty pounds to mother, and right glad I was of it then when she was ill. I wouldn't write to him, though, even when she died. I thought I'd let him find it out the best way he can, and it seems he don't know it at all."

"No, not at all, but I shall inform him at once," Godfrey said, a little haughtily; adding, after a moment, "I shall suggest that he and I together put a handsome stone at the grave. I liked your mother very much, and wished my wife to see her. As she is dead I think we will go now; if Mrs. Schuyler is ready."

"Yes, yes, oh, yes!" Gertie exclaimed, starting to her feet, while Mrs. Nesbit began to say something about stopping till Godfrey came home from school.

"He is named after your husband, you know, and my brother saved his life and lost his own," she said to Gertie, who answered:

"Yes, I know it all, and I love the memory of your brother, and we keep his grave so beautiful. I would have liked to have seen his mother so much. Mrs. Schuyler, who was here once, told me of her, and I have loved her ever since. I am sorry she is dead, but as she is I think we will go now. Good-bye, Mrs. Nesbit."

Gertie was backing toward the door while she made this long speech, and when she reached it she put out her little hand to the woman, who took it in her own coarse, dirty one, and shook it awkwardly. Gertie herself had decided the matter with regard to acknowledging her relationship to Jennie Nesbit, and I could see that Godfrey was relieved, though he said nothing till we were at a safe distance from the house, when, sitting down upon a bench under a tree, and drawing Gertie down beside him he asked:

"Couldn't you do it, Gertie?" She knew what he meant, and answered him with a trembling voice and eyes full of tears:

"No, Godfrey; I could not tell that woman that I was her brother's child. If grandma had been alive I know I should have loved her, but this dreadful barefoot woman—I couldn't—I couldn't—call her my aunt, and I kept silent as much for you as for myself. Oh, Godfrey! Oh, Miss Armstrong! was it wrong? Am I wicked to be ashamed of my blood relations?"

"Not when the relation is like Jennie Nesbit," I answered, promptly, sympathizing to the full with Gertie's distress, while Godfrey gave a long, loud whistle, and bursting into a merry laugh drew Gertie closer to him and said:

"Proud like the rest of your sex, little Gert. It is born in you women to snub each other."

"But, Godfrey," Gertie said, earnestly, "tell me, truly, ought I to acknowledge my relationship to her? Do you wish it? If you do I'll go to her now. Shall I?"

She tried to rise, but he held her back, saying: "No, ma petite, I wish no such thing. It could not benefit her, and might be a great source of annoyance to us, as I have no doubt that with a little encouragement she would be at Schnyler House before we are. For myself I don't care. I'd as soon call her aunt as not just to see people stare. Aunt Christine, for instance, and the Rev. Mrs. Marks, and Mrs. Camden, even to say nothing of father and Mrs. Schuyler, who would really feel it the most. No, Gertie, let her alone so far as aunting her is concerned. By-and-by we can benefit her children, and will, but she can never be elevated. Ephraim is joined to his idols. Let him alone, and now for that dinner I ordered for four o'clock. It's time we were on our way."

He arose, and wound his arm around Gertie, and laughingly bidding her take a last look at "the home of her fathers" where Mrs. Nesbit was again visible in the door picking her teeth with a pin, he walked rapidly through the fields toward the "White Swan," where dinner was waiting for us.

Gertie was not quite herself for the remainder of the day. I think she was troubled to know if she had done right not to give a sign to the woman whom her father had called his sister, but between whom and herself there was not the slightest sentiment in common. Such doubts have puzzled other heads than Gertie's or mine, and I shall not attempt to clear them away. I shall only say that for the sake of all concerned I was glad when we at last left Alnwick, and went straight through the beautiful country to London, and then to Paris, across the dreadful English Channel, of which one never thinks without a shudder.

And now we are here in Switzerland, with mountains on every side, and placid Lake Leman in front. Here Byron wrote his "Prisoner of Chillon," and I have slept under the same roof and stood in the very room where he wrote it, and looked from the same windows where he looked during the days when the rain was sweeping down the mountains and covering them with clouds of fog and mist. They are bright

and clear now in the September light, and only a few white rings of vapour are curling around their tops, where the snows some of yesterday and some of years ago are lying.

A little way down the lake on a point of wooded land which runs into the water there rests a cloud, with all the rainbow tints upon it, while on the vine-clad slopes above the sun is falling warmly. From the cathedral on the hill there comes to my ears a chiming of the bells, and as I listen to them I remember a morning almost a year ago, when I commenced this story, with the peal of marriage bells resounding in my ears, and the purple haze of October resting on all the hills. They for whom those bells were ringing are standing waiting for the last word to be written; and so, with a sigh of regret, like that with which we part from an old and dear friend, I write the last word, and declare the story ended.

THE END.

FALSE PRIDE.

FALSE pride is a terrible affliction. The person who suffers from it is as surely to be pitted as one who is subject to tooth-ache. Can I say no more than that? Yes, there is a great advantage on the side of the martyr who has an aching tooth; he is only too glad to be rid of it, he will endure the torture of extraction and gulp with relief when it is out. But who ever knew a victim to false pride who desired to be rid of his torture? No one. The people who are crushed most terribly beneath that tyrant's heel call him Proper Pride, and rejoice in him.

A sense of respect for the opinions of others is a great protection to us when we are only ashamed of doing what is wrong and base and contemptible, and when Conscience is the judge before whom we stand. But there are a great many people who would defy Conscience, who will not even obey her dictates, lest they should thereby offend the omnipotent Mrs. Grundy at her meanest.

It is false pride that keeps many a man always in anxiety. His income allows a moderate style of living, but he is ashamed of living within it. He must be stylish or die. So there is neither peace in his heart nor rest in his head, and till he cannot pay for ever becoming decadent and languid at his door perpetually. Providence is accused of his sudden death. Providence had arranged that he should live long and comfortably; false pride worried him to death.

False pride keeps the mechanic poor. No longer does his wife manage his little income as she used to manage it. She is as much of a lady, she boasts, as any one else. She will not go to market with a basket and choose her provisions. She gives her order, like other people, and gets what the grocer and butcher choose to give her and at any price they please to ask.

She would enjoy the marketing, it would be healthy for her to do it; but nobody else does. And she who retired at nine o'clock, and has only her household duties for the day, copies the rich woman whose carriage brought her home in the "wee sma' hours," and who has a lunch party, a dinner and a ball on hand to occupy the next twenty-four hours, and only appears out-of-doors, when dressed for a promenade. The fashionable people she imitates know nothing about her; but next-door neighbours are suffering the same tortures, and serving to their husbands the same tough steaks, wilted cabbages, and spotted potatoes, for the same reason: a false pride forbids a basket.

False pride will not let a mother carry her baby in her arms in the street, or wheel its little carriage. When it came to that one would have fancied a general uprising of mothers against this terrible old Moloch. No such thing. The mothers yielded. Those who cannot have a nurse will have a dingy little girl, top-heavy with the infant's weight, to drag it after them, or to go bumping it about the streets, quite unwatched and unguarded.

I hardly know a woman who moves in good society who is not ashamed of taking care of her own child out of doors, and I have no words for my scorn and contempt of the feeling. It is as though a queen should hide her crown, or a soldier the cross of the Legion of Honour.

Your own little child! Is it possible that you blush to be its protector anywhere—to hold it in your arms before any gaping audience of idiots, who would think you only did so because you couldn't afford a nurse-maid?

False pride causes men, and women too, to cut their friends when they wear shabby clothes; to tell dreadful fibs with the view of making themselves greater than they are; to hide their virtues and boast of their vices; often to restrain the best feelings of their natures. None of us but have suffered a little from this feeling—if only to the extent of withholding an opinion that is just and true, or assenting to something with our lips which our heart refuses to sanction.

M. K. D.



[A JEALOUS SPANIARD.]

THE EMPTY ALTAR.

"WHAT a frightful-looking old woman!"

We were standing on the steps of my residence, looking idly up and down the street, when this aged, decrepit creature tottered along at our feet, causing my friend to make the above remark. He was ashamed of the words the instant they were uttered, for she had heard them, and, pausing abruptly, raised her sunken, watery eyes to his face with a glance of mingled reproach and grief. He begged her pardon hastily, and, hoping to atone farther for his lapsus linguae, put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a coin which he urged her to accept. Her thin, colourless lips curled scornfully, and, pushing the money aside with an indignant motion, she said:

"I am not a beggar, young man, no more am I hurt by your words. Nothing of this world can hurt me. Do you think I am not conscious of my ugliness? Do you think I envy these laughing girls in their gaudy dresses, with their fond hearts and high hopes? Dreams—delusions—delights—dreads—distrusts—deceptions—darkness—death!"

She counted each word on her long, bony fingers, with her strange eyes rolling from my friend to myself, and laughed as she concluded—a shrill, hollow laugh.

Unaccountably, I felt a singular interest in the poor old creature, both from the peculiar sadness that at intervals crept into her voice, and the evidences that her language gave of her having known refinement. Eager to learn more of her, for I felt that she had a history of no common sort locked in her breast, I said:

"Come in, please, and rest yourself awhile. You can tell us something that will interest us, I am sure."

She looked at me steadily an instant, and then glanced somewhat contemptuously at the lace curtains at the windows.

"You live in a fine house," she muttered, a queer

smile wrinkling her face. "But I've been in finer ones. Yes, I'll come in."

I extended my hand to help her up the steps, but she waved it away with an imperious gesture, and, lifting her faded dress, hobbled on after me into the house. Placing an easy-chair by one of the windows, I bade her sit down, and then seated myself beside my friend on the sofa.

For minutes she gazed around the room, various emotions reflecting themselves on her sallow, withered face; and then, with the same smile of pity and contempt that I had noticed before with curiosity, she said:

"You want me to tell you of my life, don't you? You want to know if such a coarse, uncount woman was ever young—if ever these dull eyes of mine sparkled as your lady's do when you look at them! Ha, ha! you can't see far yet; you are bound up in life. I am free! I pity you, for much of the misery that comes to everybody is ahead of you, while mine has all passed."

We remained silent. Raising one bony, russet-hued arm, she pushed up the sleeve and showed us the blue veins, corded and knotted like strands of rope, and the parchment-like flesh all hard and sear. Shaking her head until her long gray hair tumbled down over her face, she said:

"That arm was white and round and soft as a babe's nearly sixty years ago. It looks like a falsehood, doesn't it? I was twenty years old then, and had refused dozens of offers from the best men in the kingdom. I am a gentlewoman—or rather was. Knights, earls, dukes knelt before me and begged for this hand—this. It was rosy then and small, and full of blood and life. Did I dream then of seeing it thus? I was a queen. My beauty was sworn by, my smiles were sought after as men seek for diamonds, and my eyes were compared to the sky when bluest. Ah, how I lived! how I revelled in the enjoyment of my power—how proud of my face, my teeth, my hair!

Look now—how dead and gray! But it was golden then—golden as the sunshine, and hung down to my slippers when loose. 'Twill never fade, I thought; I shall always be worshipped—I shall never be neglected! We are born fools, and pay for wisdom with misery—all of us!"

Clenching her hands she shook them a moment, and then, dropping her chin upon them, continued:

"Ha, ha! who has a right to pride save Time? See this crooked body, this shrivelled neck, these bent and trembling limbs! But long ago, yes, long ago, 'twas different. I was a girl, and I loved! I lay awake nights and coned over the sweet words my love had spoken, and blest my beauty for his sake. He was poor, so I had so much more to give him; for I was rich—a pet, a belle, and wilful too. My own father gave up to me, and I reigned a queen, as I said. Well-a-day! 'twas a long time ago. He was a sailor, was my lover; but I made him an officer, I and my money. When he was near me all the earth was away; when my hand was in his I thought there was no greater heaven. I laughed at titles then, and snapped my fingers in the faces of dukes—these same fingers. I stood before my mirror and played with my hair, pinched my red cheeks, smiled at my white teeth, gloried in my round, plump form, and called them all his. He called me Cinderella, because my feet were so small; in those days I always wore a number one satin boot. Now—now look! flat, misshapen they are, and wide. Time mocks the soul—time is death's agent, and life is a glittering hope, that leads to oblivion!"

With a low, rattling groan she swayed herself to and fro in her chair for a moment. At length, pushing her hair under her hood, she went on, rapidly:

"My father's house was a palace—the carpets of velvet, the curtains of silk. My chamber was fit for an Eastern princess. My wedding-day was at hand, and I was happy—oh, happy as the birds on a summer's morning! My Wilford would soon be mine, and I his, and we would live for each other; we would visit foreign countries hand in hand; we would always be together, happy in each other's love, and live in a sweet intoxication; we would die together, and would go to heaven together, I thought. Ha, ha! but that was a long, long time ago!"

I felt a chill creep over me as I listened to her strange words, and looking at my friend I saw that his face was a shade whiter.

"Wilford was to be at the house at eleven o'clock in the morning," she proceeded, in a harsh, rasping voice. "I saw him the night before, and we talked over all our plans; he was to resign his commission, so that we might never be apart. Oh, what dreams I had that night! earth was a paradise; but that was a long time ago. At half-past ten in the morning I was dressed in my bridal robes, and my bridesmaids said I looked like an angel. They were all with me, and I was so proud, so happy, so full of delight! I can see Laura Perruss and Marion Morton now—see them here right before me, as they stood then, and I turning my head towards them to listen to the sweet prophecies they were whispering.

Alack-a-day! my race is most run!

"Well, well, you're listening to me, are you? So I went downstairs in my laces and satins and my father caught his breath when he saw me, and said I was too lovely for earth! I! ha, ha! Wilford had not come yet, and I waited for him in the sitting-room, and heard the voices of the guests in the great drawing-rooms, and wondered what was keeping my love. The time passed, and my bridesmaids began to look anxious; but I laughed, and said my darling was late with his toilet—he would come very soon! My father walked from room to room in a restless way, and glanced every minute into the great hall, and held his watch in his hand most all the time. 'Twas half past the hour, but I had no fear; I knew my Wilford would come, and everybody might say just what they pleased; and so I sat smiling, while the bridesmaids shook their heads at each other and pitied me.

"By-and-by, when twelve o'clock had passed, and the guests were whispering among themselves, my father came to me with a very white face and said, 'Luella, what do you think? Why is he not here?' 'He is either ill, dead, or held a prisoner, else he would come to me—his love, his promised wife!' I saw tears in my father's eyes, and then a secret voice told me that he had heard something of my darling. 'Is he dead?' I cried, and I clutched my father's arm and stared him in the face. 'Worse,' he said, almost choking. 'He left London this morning—he has deserted you, Luella! Curse him! curse him for ever!' and my father ground his teeth.

"I felt a chill run all over me; then my flesh burned, and my head throbbled so that I lost my eyesight. I remember tearing at my dress, and stamping on my veil—those mocking things—those false, glittering robes—those white, sheeny garments!

Oh, if I could but read them into shreds—beat them into the earth out of my sight."

The old woman suddenly paused, and worked her hands together, while her aged form rocked to and fro, and her eyes glared and protruded from their sockets. At intervals she gasped for breath like a dying animal, and, becoming alarmed, I arose to get her a glass of water; but she seemed to divine my intention, and ordered me back into my seat with a fierce gesture of contempt.

"Have I lived through the reality to faint at the memory? I lived, ha, ha! but for years I lived in a mad-house. Do you know what it is to be mad?"

Her eyes seemed to burn green as she spoke, her voice sounded like the hiss of a snake, and her features were contorted into horrible shapes. My friend Russ shuddered involuntarily, and I could not bear to look at her. She waited for an answer and we shook our heads.

"I'll tell you," she shrieked, bursting into a shrill, frightful laugh. "I'll tell you what it is to be raving mad—oh, yes, I'll tell you! Don't start. You're men—men should not fear a palsied old woman! I saw myself doubled. I was two persons, and my second self followed me day and night, weeping, weeping and moaning all the time. But I couldn't touch her, she would fly away whenever I tried to take her hand, and I could not approach within six inches of her until—until one terrible hour when she came to me, but headless! With a groan which came from I knew not where, since her head was gone, she pointed to her heart. I screamed and tried to move, but in vain. I could not control a muscle of my body. Then all became black, black as the blackest night the world ever saw. I felt myself moving—moving slowly as if in a boat, and upon my ears sounded the rush of waters.

"At length my eyes opened and I beheld myself in a basket, with my bridal robes thrown across my limbs. Behind me stood a skeleton grinning at me with his fleshless jaws, while his bony hands wielded a paddle with astonishing rapidity. I looked over the side of the basket, and saw that the stream we were on was red, and I wondered why the liquid did not come through the cracks of the basket. 'Almost there!' my boatman kept saying, in a hollow voice. 'Almost there!'

She passed her hand over her brow, drew a long breath, and then, nodding her head, continued:

"When I regained my reason I was told I had been in the asylum three years. I looked at myself in the glass, and started back with a cry of pain. My glorious hair was cut short, I had now only a few ring curls in my neck, and a straggling few on my brow. My face was thin, sharp and sallow; my eyes had lost their beauty, and my form was spare and ungraceful. I wept, and vowed never to look at my reflection in another mirror.

"After resting a few days with some kind friends who knew my history I expressed a wish to go home and see my father; then I saw them gaze sadly at each other, pityingly upon me, and I knew that my kind father was dead. I bore it remarkably well, though it aroused rage in my soul when I thought who had brought all this upon us, and I swore to have revenge upon the villain Wilford. This was the first time I had thought of him since I came out of the asylum, and it brought the past vividly to my mind. Resolving to find this man if he was on earth, I asked my friends to aid me in obtaining possession of my father's property. This could not be done until it could be shown that my reason was again firmly established, and so I had to wait a long, long year. I had improved a little in appearance during that time, though I was still far from resembling my former self.

"Having at last gained my right, I sold my town and country residences, and put the proceeds in a bank along with the heavy deposits that were there previously. Now I strove to find some trace of Wilford, and, after examining many witnesses and making a long and wearisome search, I found that a man answering to his description had sailed for Spain in the barque 'Saint Moro,' four years before, on the day following my intended marriage. My efforts were now directed to finding the captain of this vessel, and at last after a year of trouble I succeeded, but he could tell me little more than I had learned already. I now resolved to go to Spain, and prosecute my search in person. Ah, me! but that was a long, long time ago!"

The poor old creature sighed, and covered her face with her wrinkled hands.

"Did you find him?" Russ asked, encouragingly.

"Yes, yes, I found him, didn't I swear I would, and did I ever break my oath?" she replied, clenching her fist and speaking with great vehemence. "I found him allied to a noble family, and happy in the possession of a dark-eyed wife and a prattling babe. But I guarded against recognition by him even before I began my search, which occupied a

year, bringing me up to the age of twenty-five. I coloured my hair and my eyebrows black, bought myself a title—titles were always cheap in Spain, but cheaper to-day than ever—and made my entry into court. Now I was near him, heard his voice daily, and saw him look with fondness upon his wife. Don't think that I felt any desire to kill either of them—I was well born, remember, and not low. But still I would have revenge, a fine, delicate, yet deadly revenge.

"Being recognized as an equal—for which I blessed my money—I soon made the acquaintance of Wilford and his wife, and was a frequent visitor at their house. By degrees I worked my way into the affections of the countess, and became her intimate friend. Of course I saw Wilford—now Count Calmo, a great deal, but he never suspected me, the dolt, he was like all men, blind except in his own conceit. The countess, like all her race, was fiercely jealous, and sometimes when her husband was talking to me I could see her eyes flash and her lips come together. In this lay my advantage, and I clutched at it eagerly.

"One day while chatting with her I learned that Wilford had first seen her at Cadiz, when his ship was laying off there, and she had fallen in love with him. Now I knew what had broken his allegiance to me—the glitter of a Spanish coronet. Carefully, artfully I aroused her jealousy against a beautiful lady of the court whom her husband frequently addressed, and at last the countess grew furious. I laughed in secret, but bade her not be rash; told her that I would watch them and keep her informed of their movements. By this time I was acquainted with all the parties and so I could work my plans easily.

"Sending a letter to the lady, I obtained her presence in the garden of the count's mansion, and then telling him that his wife was there, I ran into the house to bring her to witness the meeting. The count flew to the arbour, where he supposed his wife to be, and two minutes later I was there with his wife, watching them through the trees. It seems that he had embraced the lady, who at first sight was much like his wife, and that she, having secretly loved him, received it as a tribute of affection, and would not believe he had mistaken her for his wife.

"When we reached the place she was reproaching him with bitterness, and shaking the letter I had written her in his face. The countess dashed in upon them with blazing eyes, tore the letter from the lady's hand and glancing to the bottom of the page saw the count's signature. Oh, wasn't she angry then! She would have killed him on the spot if she had possessed a weapon, but I had foreseen this, and hid all she owned. Down upon his knees dropped the count—my Wilford of old—and begged and protested; but all in vain, his wife would not believe a word he said. Oh! it made my heart glad to see his anguish and hear his voice in supplication. But that was a long, long time ago!"

The old woman closed her eyes, and laid her head back as if very weary.

The twilight had deepened into dark; arising, I lighted the gas.

"Won't you take a little refreshment now, Luella?" said Russ, not knowing what other name to use.

"Who calls me, Luella?" she cried, staring forward excitedly, and then added, with a chuckling laugh. "It's my name yet, though I am faded and ugly. No, I eat only three times a day, young man. Well, my fine count had to leave his fair countess, or die, for she swore she would kill him, and she meant it. Twice I foiled her in her attempts to poison him, and then he was only too eager to get away. He knew that I had saved his life, and he was grateful, he said. Bah! his gratitude! One night he stole away, taking his child—a little girl—with him, and succeeded in secreting himself in a vessel bound for England.

"Shortly afterward I left Spain, and returned to London. Finding that I had so changed that my friends in London did not know me, I gave out word that Luella was dead, and I was her heiress. As I had all the necessary papers to prove this—death certificates are easily bought—and all the certificates of money deposited, I easily came into possession of my own fortune, and attended my own funeral, attired in deep black. Of course I had to buy a corpse to represent myself, but that was no particular trouble. Ha! ha! money will do anything. This safely accomplished, I caused my lawyers to write to Wilford, tell him of Luella's death, and that he was heir to ten thousand pounds. You may be sure that this brought him and the child to London in a trice. He visited my grave, made a great show of sorrow, heaped reproaches upon himself, called me an angel, and then took expensive lodgings, and began to spend my money freely. Announcing that I was going to France, I shut myself up for a week, then I presented myself before Wallace Wilbraham, as he now

called himself, and requested a place as governess for his child. He liked my appearance, and I at once began my duties. I hated the man now, hated him with as much fervour as I ever had loved him.

"I had been there a week, and it was now time to commence to torture him. Dressing myself in white, I put on a wig of golden hair, and appeared before him after he had retired, as Luella. The device was a perfect success. He shivered and groaned. The second time I appeared he fired at me twice with his pistols, but as I had taken good care to remove the bullets I was not harmed, and his belief that I was a veritable ghost was strengthened. He now became moody and sullen, and trembled at the slightest sound. Oh, it was food and drink to me to see his misery! Twice a week for a whole month I walked as a ghost, and my master grew thin, nervous and sleepless. Often I heard him praying to have the phantom removed from him, and my heart leaped with delight as I witnessed his suffering. At length he took to drinking, and remained in a stupor the greater part of the time. Earth had no peace for him. He was reaping his reward for the agony he had inflicted upon me. Gradually but surely he was going to his death, and in three months from that time he met it. Remorse killed him—I did not. I felt no pangs when I saw him cold before me, but I remembered the day when in my white robes I waited for him—waited, and had faith in him when all around me doubted him. Well-a-day, that was a long time ago."

The old woman worked her hands, and muttered some unintelligible words to herself.

"What became of the child?" I asked, deeply interested in this marvellous story.

"His child? oh! yes," she mumbled, passing her hand across her brow, "I took her. She was then four years old. I named her Stella Wilbraham, to suit myself, and looked out for her as tenderly as if she were my own, and gave her a good education. When she was twenty years old she married; she was miserable after the first five years of her married life, and often came to me for comfort. I gave her all I could, but my sympathy for married people isn't much. Stella lived to forty years of age, then I helped lay her out for the grave, and took her only child home with me, to bring up as I had her mother."

"I was sixty-three years old when Stella died, and her little girl was just five. Now the little one is a young woman of nineteen, beautiful and good—too good—some villain will win her and make her miserable, I suppose. Alack-a-day, so the world goes! I've seen much in my time—more than the most of women. But my day's most run out."

"Do you think she is insane, or is all this true?" whispered Russ.

The old woman's quick ear had caught his words, and before I could reply she darted a scornful look at him from her sunken eyes, and said, impatiently:

"Have I strength or time to amuse two nineties with a pack of falsehoods? Do you think I could make up all this? Out upon you for a stupid ingrate."

Scowling darkly, she drew her old shawl around her and arose to her feet. Russ apologized, but she paid no heed to his words; she had evidently taken a strong dislike to him. As she left us I asked her where she lived, and thanked her for telling us her history, but she said brusquely that when she wanted to see me again she would come where I was, and that she told her story because she liked to, not to please us.

"Can it be true?" said Russ, looking at me in mingled perplexity and anxiety.

I returned his glance, and perceived at once that there was something on his mind. Wondering what it could be, I answered:

"My dear fellow, truth is stranger than fiction every day in the week. As to our visitor being insane, that is absurd—no lunatic can break the thread of a story and recover it as she did. I tested her on that in the first part of her narrative, or rather we both did, by remaining silent. You know Shakespeare makes Hamlet say, when he is thought to be insane, 'Bring me to the test, and I'll matter will re-word, which madness would gambol from.' But what troubles you? for that something does is very evident."

"I'll tell you, Walter," Russ answered, rather nervously, and trying hard to avoid my gaze. "You know Flora Mayne? Yes, of course you do. Well, I have been very attentive to her for some eight months, and I am confident she loves me. She is a good girl, and I really think a great deal of her, but lately I have been much with Marion Vesey. Marion is rich, you know, and beautiful."

"And you are considering which is the better investment," I said, reprovingly. "For shame: your income is enough to be comfortable on—let Marion go, and return to Flora."

"By Jove, I will!" he exclaimed, with evident re-

hief. "It is the only way to satisfy my conscience. I may thank this old woman and you for making me take counsel of my heart instead of my ambition."

Four months subsequently Russ Leyden married Flora Mayne. Six months after that an aged woman died, leaving her adopted daughter ten thousand pounds. W. G. E.

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER.

WHEN he was a very little boy Edwin Landseer used to ask his mother to set him a copy to draw from, and then complain that she always drew one of two things, either a shoe or a currant-pudding, of both of which he was quite tired. No wonder that this was insufficient food for the eager young spirit for whose genius in after life two kingdoms were not too wide a range. The boy when he was little older, and when his bent seemed more clearly determined, went to his father and asked him for teaching. The father was a wise man, and told his son that he could not himself teach him to be a painter, that Nature was the only school, Observation the true and only teacher. He told little Edwin to use his own powers; to think about all the things he saw; to copy everything; and then he turned the boy out with his brothers—they were all three much of an age—to draw the world as it then existed upon Hampstead Heath.

There seem to have been then, as now, donkeys upon the common, old horses grazing the turf and gorse, and chickens and children at play, though perhaps now, alas! no little curly-headed boy is there storing up treasures for the use of a whole generation to come. Day after day the children used to spend upon the Heath in the fresh air, at their sports and their flights, but learning meanwhile their early lesson. Their elder sister used to go with them, a young Mentor to keep those frolicsome spirits within bounds. One can imagine the little party, buoyant, active, in the full, delightful spring of early youth. Perhaps youth is a special attribute belonging to artistic natures, to those whom the gods have favoured, and the old fanciful mythology is not all a fable.

Some boys are never young. Something of this indescribable youthful brightness still seemed to be with Sir Edwin Landseer even when the cloud which dimmed his later years had already partially fallen. But the cruel cloud is more than half a century distant at the time of which we are writing, and, thanks be to Heaven, the whole flood of life and work and achievement lies between.

Little Edwin painted a picture in these very early days, which was afterwards sold. It was called the "Mischievous boy," a mischievous boy had tied a log of wood to the tail of a mischievous donkey. The little donkey's head in the South Kensington Museum may have been drawn upon Hampstead Heath—a careful black-lead donkey, that cropped the turf and looked up one day, some sixty years ago, with a puzzled face. Perhaps it was wondering at the size of the artist standing opposite, with his little sympathetic hand at work. The drawing is marked "E. Landseer, five years old."

A CHINESE plant which changes colour three times a day has just been sent to the Paris Jardin d'Acclimatation. In the animal world, more especially amongst the politicians, we were aware that these mutations of colour were not uncommon, but this is the first time that we have heard of them amongst the plants.

INCOME OF THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH.—The Act of Parliament passed in August last came into force on the day of the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh. His Royal Highness has, by the 29 Vic., cap. 8, 15,000*l.* a year, and by the statute of the late session an additional annuity of 10,000*l.*—making 25,000*l.* a year. By the last Act the Grand Duchess will have an annuity of 6,000*l.* in the event of surviving his Royal Highness. The allowance of the additional 10,000*l.* dates from the marriage, and on the next quarter-day the proportionate amount is to be paid free from all taxes, assessments, and charges.

THE AVERAGE TALK OF A WOMAN.—A man of average talkativeness speaks three hours a day, and at the rate of one hundred words a minute; that is to say enough words to fill about twenty-five octavo pages in moderate print every hour, six hundred pages in a week, and in one year fifty-two pretty large volumes. The American author who got up these statistics says that if you multiply these numbers by ten you arrive at about the average talk of a woman. Let us see, that is ten times three hours a day; they have, therefore, apparently thirty hours a day in America. Very go-a-head people, very.

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, 1874.—The following are the dates appointed for the reception of British goods: Monday, 16th February, Class 10 (Weaving)—West entrance; Monday, 23rd February,

Class 1 (Paintings in Oil)—West entrance; Tuesday, 24th February (Water Colours, Drawings, etc.)—East entrance; Wednesday, 25th, and Thursday, 26th February, Class 2 (Sculpture)—West entrance; Friday, 27th February, Classes 2 and 7 (Fine Art Furniture and Decorative Works, Reproductions)—West entrance; Friday, 27th February, Class 1 (Stained Glass)—West entrance; Saturday, 28th February, Classes 2 and 4 (Fine Art Furniture and Decorative Works, Architectural Designs)—West entrance; Monday, 2nd March, Classes 3 and 5 (Engravings, Photographs and Tapestries)—East entrance; Tuesday, 3rd March, Class 6 (Designs for Decorative Manufactures)—East entrance; Wednesday, 4th March (Machinery of all Classes)—West entrance; Thursday, 5th March, Class 9 (Civil Engineering)—East entrance; Friday, 6th March, Class 11 (Leather, Saddlery and Harness)—East entrance; Saturday, 7th March, Class 12 (Bookbinding)—East entrance; Wednesday, 11th March, Class 14 (Scientific Inventions)—West entrance; Tuesday, 17th March, Class 8 (Lace)—East entrance. The entrances for the reception of goods will be as follows: (1) East entrance in Exhibition Road; (2) West entrance in Prince Albert's Road. All objects must be delivered at the building at the entrances specified, and on the days named above.

WEATHER CHANGES TO THE OLD.

Up to thirty years of age the system bears changes of temperature better than later in life. All know the injurious nature of sudden changes from a colder to a warmer air. Observation shows that while there is one death from such sudden change among persons about thirty years of age there will be two deaths among an equal number at thirty-nine, four deaths among an equal number nine years later—that is, at forty-eight—eight deaths at fifty-seven, sixteen at sixty-six, thirty-two at seventy-five, sixty-four at eighty-four; hence there is a rapidly increasing necessity, after "three score" of guarding against exposure to sudden changes of weather; while onedies at thirty thirty-two dies at seventy-five.

It is said of the Duke of Wellington that at four score it required him to keep his room so warm, in order to render him comfortable, that few persons could remain in it with any degree of satisfaction longer than a very few moments at a time, and that he always put his head out of the window on rising in the morning, to determine by his feelings the temperature of the air, and then would order a coat to be brought to him adapted to the temperature. It was by such carefulness that he was able to reach a good old age.

No one, after "three score," can afford to neglect these little precautions. It cannot be done with impunity. It is for the want of it that so many persons, after that age, in apparent health, are hurried to the grave in a few days from pneumonia, known commonly as inflammation of the lungs.

It would answer a valuable purpose if all old and frail persons would have a permanent thermometer outside the chamber window, and one inside, so as to determine every morning the difference between the outer and inner temperature. A difference of twenty degrees or more, especially if there is much wind, imperatively demands a warmer dress for the outside, and not to be changed to a thinner material until next morning.

SHIPPING TORPEDOES AND TORPEDO CABLES TO AMERICA.—American advices state that the British ship "International" had arrived at New York from London with a cargo of iron torpedoes and 1,64 miles of torpedo cable for the United States Government. There were also a large number of electric batteries on board, to be used in working the cable. The torpedoes are composed of iron and copper of the best material, and one of them would be sufficient to blow up a large ship.

LAUGH AND BE HEALTHY.—The physiological benefit of laughter is explained by Dr. E. Hecker. The comic-like tickling causes a reflex action of the sympathetic nerve, by which the calibre of the vascular portions of the system is diminished, and their nervous powers increased. The average pressure of the cerebral vessels on the brain substance is thus decreased, and this is compensated by the forced expiration of laughter, and the larger amount of blood thus called to the lungs. We always feel good when we laugh, but until now we never knew the scientific reason why.

BURLINGTON HOUSE.—The new gallery which is building at Burlington House is nearly finished, and will, it is hoped, be open by the next Summer Exhibition of pictures. The principal room will contain the diploma works painted by every elected Royal Academician since the foundation of the Society, more than a century ago, as well as work by every sculptor and architect so elected. Another room

contains the works of John Gibson, the sculptor, which he left to the nation, and which have for some years been stored away in a cellar of the National Gallery. A third room will contain valuable pictures by the old masters belonging to the Academy, among them a "Last Supper," painted by a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, the head of Christ being by Leonardo himself.

FACETIÆ.

WHATEVER the wind may do in winter it cannot be denied that in spring "it turns over a new leaf."

NOT WANTED.—The ex-king of Naples has taken up his quarters in Paris in the suburb of Saint Mandé. He is not likely to be demanded.—*Fun.*

JAM SATIS.—We are told that the author of "Dame Europa's School" is about to publish "The House that Baby built." Autobiographies are very rarely interesting.—*Fun.*

A REVENGEFUL individual, in the exuberance of his rage at some one who offended him, said: "I'll have revenge! I'll do something terrible! I'll give his little boy a tin horn."

A LONDON beadle sent his card to the members of the congregation he administered to, praying that they would leave their New Year's gratuity for him on the seat.

WHAT is the difference between a newspaper reporter and a man who has lost his right hand? The one is a shorthand writer, and the other is a right hand shorter.

CURIOSITY IN SPORT.—It is probable that an attempt will shortly be made to badger the Chancellor of the Exchequer into the repeal of the Malt Tax with a pack of Malt-tease Terriers.—*Fun.*

"WHAT do you know of the character of this man?" was asked of a witness at a police-court the other day. "What do I know of his character? I know it to be unbleachable, your honour," replied he, with emphasis.

A LITTLE girl of five summers was severely stung by a hornet, and, running into the house, she told her mother that she had been bitten by something that looked like "a yellow carriage with the top turned back."

HOME RULING THE WAVES.—A Newry shipowner has been committed for sending to sea a ship named "The Repeater," which foundered. He should have called it "Home Rule," because that won't go down at all!—*Fun.*

HEAR!—"Please speak louder," said the Lord Chief Justice on the last day of Dr. Keene's speech. "I am trying to do so," was the reply; "but I have been speaking twenty-one days." "Quite true," said a juror; "three weeks don't make one strong."—*Fun.*

"VEGETABLE pills!" exclaimed an old lady; "don't talk to me of such stuff! The best vegetable pill ever made is apple-dumpling. For destroying a gnawing in the stomach there is nothing like it. It always can be relied on."

A POSER.

Minnie (inquisitive child): "Mamma, you told me that ladies should always be first, didn't you?"

Mamma: "Yes, my darling, certainly."

Minnie: "Then, if you please, why wasn't I born before Willie?"—*Fun.*

A DOUBLE FIRST.

Rector's Wife: "It really is a very strange thing, Dibles, that you and your wife quarrel so often!"

Dibles: "Ees, marm, it be rum, 'cause we both agree on one main pint. She wants to be marster, and so do I!"—*Fun.*

"SYNONYMOUS."

Instructor: "Now, I've explained the different 'sights,' you, Private Dumpty, tell me what a fine 'sight' is. Describe it as well as you can—"

Private Dumpty: "A fine sight, sir? A fine sight—(pondering)—'s a magnificen' spectacle, sir!"—*Punch.*

A TRUE WOMAN.—Mrs. Malaprop reads every word that is written about the Royal and Imperial Marriage. Like most of her sex, she is particularly interested in the descriptions of the ladies' dresses and twilights. Having often heard of "Siberian crabs," she sent to her fishmonger on the day of the wedding for a nice one, but he could not oblige her.—*Punch.*

SONGS OF MY YOUTH.

Young Lady (purchasing some New Songs): "Come back to Erin, 'The Vagabond,' 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

Shopman: "Yes, miss."

Young Lady: "Now, 'Spring! Spring!'"

Shopman: "I'll be as quick as I can, miss, but I've the rheumatics in my knee, you see!"—*Fun.*

FAITH.—A female teacher in an Aberdeen school wished to communicate to her pupils an idea of faith. While she was trying to explain the meaning of the word a butcher's cart came in sight. Seizing upon the incident for an illustration, she exclaimed: "If I

were to tell you that there was a leg of mutton in that cart, you would believe me, would you not, without even seeing it yourselves?" "Yes, ma'am," replied the scholars. "Well, that is faith," replied the schoolmistress. The next day, in order to test their recollection of the lesson, she inquired, "What is faith?" "A leg of mutton in a cart," was the answer shouted from all parts of the school-room.

WHILE we are trying to put down the African slave trade we must find a spare moment to look at home. Here is an advertisement from a Liverpool paper—"A clergyman desires to receive a boy in exchange for his daughter, aged 13." Surely this kind of traffic in children is illegal! But perhaps the receiving gentleman means for the purposes of education. If so, then he should say so, as there are a great many nervous old ladies about.—*Pun.*

MOUNTED BEGGARS.—The queerest object in nature is a Spanish beggar, for these beggars beg on horseback; and it is an odd thing to see a man riding up to a poor foot passenger and asking alms. A gentleman in Valparaiso, being arrested by one of these mounted beggars, replied, "Why, sir, you come to beg of me, who have to go on foot, while you ride on horseback!" "Very true, sir," said the beggar, "and I have the more need to beg, as I have to support my horse as well as myself."

A TREMENDOUS SELL.

Fidgetty old Bachelor (who hates juvenile parties, and has come two hours later than he was asked, so as to avoid the children): "So sorry to be late—I'm dreadfully afraid I've missed all the darling little ones!"

Lively Hostess: "Oh, dear, no. Our supper has been put off two hours. The darling little ones are having tea, but they'll be down directly for 'Sir Roger de Coverley'; so you're just in time to help us clear the room, and join in a regular romp!"—*Punch.*

A YOUTHFUL INFIRMITY.—What is the reason why many a young man goes about, especially at balls and parties, with a single eye-glass stuck in one of his eyes? If he were short-sighted he would use a double one. It is not defective vision that he is afflicted with, but mental deficiency. Consciousness of folly makes him afraid of looking foolish, and the muscular contortions of countenance which attend the effort to retain the eye-glass in the orbit enable him to disguise his naturally vacant expression with a grimace.—*Punch.*

"OH!"

(Algernon is devoted to Science, and makes his young bride read all the new Scientific Books to him.)

Mrs. Algernon: "Really, Algernon, all this about Differential and Integral Calculus, and Biostatics, and Biondynamics, and Molecules, and Concretes and things, seems to me rather extraordinary! You can't generally accuse me of prudishness, but is this the sort of book that mamma would quite approve of my reading, love?"—*Punch.*

A SHARP CHILD.

A boy was reading of the curious skin of an elephant.

"Did you ever see an elephant's skin?" asked his teacher.

"I have," shouted a little six-year old, at the foot of the class.

"Where?" said the preceptor, quite amused at his earnestness.

"On the elephant!" said he, with a provoking grin.

He had seen "the elephant," young as he was.

HUMBUG.—A barrister had been puzzling and perplexing a lady some time with questions, when in one of her replies she happened to use the word humbug. "Madam," said he, "you must not talk unintelligibly; what is the jury or the court to understand by the word humbug?" The lady hesitated. "I must insist, madam," said the barrister, "before you proceed farther with your evidence, that you state plainly and openly what you understand by a humbug." "Why then, sir," said the lady, "I know not how to exemplify my meaning better than by saying that if I were to meet any persons who, being at present strangers to you, should say that they expected soon to meet you in some particular company, and I were to tell them to prepare to see a remarkably pleasing-looking man that would be a humbug."

APPEAL TO A JURY.—"Gentlemen of the Jury: I quote from Shakespeare when I say to you, 'To be or not to be liicked—that's the question.' My client is a national stump machine—he flings his wrath in parables; and it is dangerous to run a snag against his interest. Let me be made fodder for a fool, and chowder for a powder mill, if he is guilty, notwithstanding the criminal absurdities alleged against him. Do you believe that my client is so destitute of the common principle of humanity—so full of the fog of human nature—so wrapped up in the moral insensibility of his being, as deliberately to pick up a tater

and throw it at the nasal protuberance of the prosecutor? No; not while you can discern a star in the northern sky—while the waters of the Atlantic roll—this immutable principle will remain—that my client is a gentleman, tater or no tater!"

A PUZZLING MATTER.—A man died the other day, leaving a will in which he directed that a thousand pounds should be paid to a woman whom he used to love "within a twelvemonth and in three annual instalments." The lawyers are all busy now endeavouring to ascertain how to accomplish these payments in the manner specified; and it is thought by well-informed persons that by the time they arrive at a conclusion they will have most of the cash in their own pockets. The woman says she is perfectly willing to take the whole amount right off. She says she would do anything for the man she once loved. But while the lawyers appreciate this lofty spirit of self-sacrifice, and point to this noble example of womanly devotion, they affirm that they must adhere to the strict letter of the will, and that puzzles them.

A LEGEND WITHOUT A TRAGEDY.

Ten daughters had Donald McPherson,
Ten daughters and never a son;
Like a steep flight of stairs were the lassies,
And fair as the day every one.
But Donald, he fretted and worried,
And envied his neighbour McKay,
Whose boys climbed the trees and the fences,
An army in battle array.

So strange is this world, or the mortals
That people this planet of ours;
For McKay and his wife burned with envy
And railed at poor Fate and her powers,
That gave to that ugly McPherson
So many fair girls as his share,
And denied them one daughter to brighten
And sweeten life's toil and its care!

Meantime, as the "gude folk" went fretting
And storming at obstinate Fate,
The boys and the girls played together
As happy as heirs of the great.
The lads made the fair lassies braver
In roaming the banks and the braes,
While the fair lassies made the lads better
And softened their boisterous ways.

Years passed and the young people married,
The two houses joined into one,
Till each has ten sons and ten daughters,
For thus the strange story doth run.
The old folks then sat the corner,
With joy and contentment alone,
The elder McKays and McPhersons,
Nor railed any more at poor Fate!

M. A. K.

GEMS.

THE best court of equity is a good conscience.
MAN wastes his mornings in anticipating his
afternoons, and he wastes his afternoons in regret-
ting his mornings.

"LABOUR for learning before you grow old,
For learning is better than silver and gold;
Silver and gold will vanish away,

But learning once gotten will never decay."
ANGER dies soon with a wise and good man. Too
much prosperity makes men fools. Experience
keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other.
Wealth is not his who gets it, but his who enjoys
it. Employ your time well, if you mean to gain lei-
sure. A man may have a thousand acquaintances,
and not one friend among them. It is better to live
on a little than to outlive a great deal. By
others' faults wise men correct their own. We should
take a prudent care for the future, but so as to enjoy
the present.

UNION OF THE CHURCHES.—The High Church
party, we hear, are secretly exulting at the prospect
of an approximation between the Russo-Greek and
the English Churches, which they believe will result
from the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh. Whether
the Duchess of Edinburgh will conform to the
Church of England on her arrival in this country
remains to be seen, but the High Church party hope
that she will do so, with the permission, not only of
the Czar, but of the Holy Synod; and their argu-
ment is that if this occurs the practical union of
the Churches will have been effected.

THE RUSSIAN NAVAL MUSEUM.—The Duke of
Edinburgh has, as a sailor and an honorary Russian
naval officer, paid a visit to the Russian Naval Mu-
seum. He was accompanied by the Grand Duke
Constantine, who is Grand Admiral of the Fleet. It
so happens that at the present time an unusually large

number of naval officers are on shore, and these, in
their full uniform, received their shipmate, if one
might use the expression. In the museum nothing
is wanting, from keel to truck, to illustrate the science
and history of shipbuilding. There is a complete
model of the Russian ironclad fleet, and over this the
Duke of Edinburgh lingered longest. Admiral Popoff,
who has been temporarily attached to the Duke of
Edinburgh's suite, was in the party to explain the
theory upon which he designed the singular round
floating battery for service in shallow waters, princi-
pally the Sea of Azov. This curious ship spins round
like a top, her turret being consequently a fixture;
and she is propelled by half a dozen engines. Con-
spicuous amongst the ironclads was, of course,
"Peter the Great," about which we heard something
in England during the debate on the Naval Esti-
mates.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BOTTLING BEER.—As soon as the beer has fined
remove the vent peg, and let the beer in the cask get
quite flat; have the bottles perfectly dry; cork well
as soon as filled, and lay in a moderately warm place
until the beer gets up, which will be in a week or so,
according to temperature. It should then be moved
to the cellar.

SILVERING MIRRORS.—Take as many grains of
nitrate of silver as you intend to use, dissolve in
distilled water, add ammonia until it clears, then add
silver solution again until a little turbid; when
ready for silvering add a solution of as many grains
of Rochelle salts. Dr. Draper used 500 grains of
Rochelle salts to 800 grains of nitrate of silver for a
15 in. mirror. There is nothing in his method that
differs from the usual method when using Rochelle
salts.

NETTLES FOR CURATIVE PURPOSES.—The botani-
cal characters of the Urtica dioica or great nettle,
as given by Hooker, are: Leaves ovate, acuminate,
cordate at the base, clusters much branched in pairs,
mostly dioecious; waste places, under walls and
hedge-banks frequent. The ancient physicians
thought the expressed juice of this plant possessed
astringent properties, and prescribed it in cases of
losses of blood, especially in cough, with spitting of
blood. There is no doubt that many cases of this
nature have been cured by its use, vide Dr. Pit-
schaff, in "Hufeland's Journal," 1831, June. The
dose is 2 to 4 oz. of the expressed juice per diem.
Amatus Lusitannus gave 4 oz. before breakfast dur-
ing five or six days.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A GREAT sensation has been created by the arrival
at the Jardin des Plantes of a dromedary which is
perfectly white. This animal is rarer than a white
elephant, and it is to be hoped, not quite so costly.

The magnificent statue of Hercules, which was
discovered a short time ago at Limassol, in Cyprus,
is about to be conveyed to the Imperial Museum at
Constantinople.

SINCE the commencement of the year Paris has
been enveloped in a succession of fogs, which the
philosophical accept as in harmony with the general
gloominess of affairs, and others as a proof of the
alliance with England.

WARWICK CASTLE.—Good progress is being made
in the restoration of Warwick Castle. The great
hall, which was completely gutted by the fire that
occurred two years ago, is in an advanced stage of
renovation, and the relaying of its marble floor will
shortly commence.

The English Eleven, who used to have it all their
own way in the mother country, seem to have met
with foemen more worthy of their steel at the Anti-
podes. A twenty-two of the Stawell Cricket Club
have completely vanquished them, with ten wickets
to spare.

NINE CHINESE GIRLS PREFERRING DEATH TO
MATRIMONY.—A recent Chinese newspaper publishes
the following account of an incident at Whampoa:—
"Nine young girls, living with different families in
the village, seem to have entertained an aversion to
married life. Seeing the misery and toil to which
the members of the families with whom they lived
were subjected, and above all the slave-like obedience
of the wives to the wills of their husbands, the dam-
sels came to the resolution to commit suicide. They
met by appointment on the bank of the river at the
entrance of one of the creeks near Brown's Folly,
attired in heavy winter garments, which they had
sewn all together to prevent a separation. While
thus united in body, heart, and mind, they plunged
into the deep. As this happened close to the festival
of the seven female gnomes who descended from heaven
and are called the Seven Sisters, all sorts of super-
stitious conclusions have been drawn from it."

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. M.—Speaking generally, we should say the *New York Herald*.

N. H. (Wolverhampton).—A cautious application of caustic is one of the best remedies for warts.

H. P. G. S.—An emblem of gratitude in the first instance, and secondarily of attachment and of union.

M. H.—Send us your announcement and it shall appear in the usual course.

SCOTLAND.—Kindly repeat your question a little more explicitly. Do you mean the pay of a private, for instance? We will then be in a position to inform you.

ALEXANDER.—The Custos Rotulorum (keeper of the rolls) is the civil officer of a county to whose custody are committed the records or rolls of the sessions.

PISISTRATUS CAXTON.—On the completion of the story in question you can get it "in book form" by purchasing the bound volume of the *LONDON READER*.

FANNY.—The sentiment of your lines is pretty and is creditable to you. But it seems a trifle too trite for publication. Try again, and we dare say you will produce something very good by-and-by.

DELTA.—It would be invidious to particularize too minutely, but Colt's are generally considered as among the best. Any directory would give you a long list. 2. Perhaps Negretti and Zambra—but, as in the other case, there are many makers of great eminence.

S. P. (Rochdale).—Dr. Johnson lived in Fleet Street—first in Fetter Lane, then in Bowdler Court, then in Gough Square, then in the Inner Temple Lane for seven years, and finally in Bolt Court. See Boswell's life of that truly great man.

R. L. G.—I, any bookseller, by the usual order, will supply you with a copy of Sheridan's Works. 2. The volume of the *READER* is still in print, and may be obtained on communication with our publisher.

ELLEN.—George Sand is the nom de plume of Madame Dudevant, a French authoress. This whimsical name was assumed out of attachment to Jules Sand or Sandeau, a young student, in conjunction with whom she published her first novel.

M. M.—Send us your announcement, and it shall appear in due course. From pressure on our space, and the immense mass of correspondence constantly arriving, we cannot always insert these notices immediately on receiving them.

LUCK.—We sympathize greatly with you in your misfortunes. But the only way is to look out for another situation, and this, considering your evident qualifications, you should be able to secure easily. We wish you all success.

MILITARY.—The rank is the depth, and the file the length of marching soldiers. The "rank" men stand shoulder to shoulder, the "file" men stand behind each other. Thus a hundred men four deep would be twenty-five files ranged four in a row—in four ranks.

S. S.—George Hudson, a native of the town of York, was chairman of the North Midland Company and for a time the entire dictator of the railway speculations. In one day he cleared 100,000*l.* His connection with the Eastern Counties Railway subsequently dissipated his great wealth, and a year ago a subscription was started for his relief.

J. W. J. (Dublin).—Nitrate of silver, 1 dr.; rose water, 1 lb. oz.; nitrate of copper, 2 grs., is considered an excellent hair dye—though it would not convey the tint you require. The celebrated auriferous or golden fluid remains, we believe, a profound trade secret. If however you required it for sale you could doubtless obtain a good and liberal commission.

J. H.—If you will address a letter to the Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon Row, Westminster, you will receive full and accurate information. Stauffer's or White's guide to the Civil Service examinations are both good, useful books, but you would probably require some assistance from a competent tutor. For these consult the advertising columns of any daily paper.

JERSEY.—1. The largest opera houses are we believe those of La Scala at Milan, of New York, and of St. Petersburg. One of the famous opera houses of Paris was burned down a few weeks ago. 2. At Waterloo the Frenchmen under the Corsican numbered 71,947 men, the Allies under Wellington 67,061 men, and the Prussians 16,000, afterwards raised by fresh accessions to above 50,000.

X. X. X.—By the phrase Pillars of Hercules are meant the opposite rocks at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, one in Spain and the other on the African continent.

The tale is that they were bound together till Hercules tore them asunder in order to reach Gades, the modern Cadiz. By the ancients these were designated Calpe and Abyla; we now term them Gibraltar Rock and Mount Hacho, on which is built the fortress of Ceuta.

M. C. T. E. D.—We rather like your lines "My heart is Yours," only the versification is too irregular, as you will at once perceive on counting the recurrent cadences. All this however may be easily set right.

EMMA.—1. Lady Hamilton, unprincipled, reckless, but strangely and gloriously beautiful, died in great distress at Calais, and this notwithstanding the expressed and final wish of Nelson, as that illustrious man expired on board the good old ship "The Victory." Lady Hamilton was a sort of Cleopatra of modern times, but her end was also most melancholy. 2. Mr. Disraeli is the older of the two.

ARION.—The Troubadours were minstrels of the south of France (Avignon and in Provence generally) in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. They were so designated from the Provencal verb *troubler*, meaning to invent. Our own word poet signifies precisely the same thing, being only the great word for a creator, and the old mediæval poets were commonly called makers. In fact, Spenser uses the word make in the sense of to write verses—a use long obsolete.

PHILIP.—The following is the way to clean a sponge which has become dirty with long usage. Old sponges that have been employed for some time, and have become full of grease and dirt, may be again used in place of new ones. To clean it, a solution of permanganate of potash in water is prepared of such a strength that it appears of a wine colour, and into this the unserviceable sponge is immersed, and allowed to remain in the liquid for some time. When taken out and squeezed it is next put into a diluted muriatic acid of ordinary commercial quality, being immersed and kept saturated therein for some time as before. The most appropriate strength of this acid solution is about ten parts water to one part acid. The sponge is taken out after sufficient treatment, squeezed well to free it from the acid, and then washed well in good spring water. When taken out it will be found to be quite clean, to have again assumed its light colour, and to be free from all foreign matter. Sponges treated in this way become like new sponges. The main thing to be attended to in this plan of purifying sponges is to see that it is thoroughly saturated both by the permanganate and the acid solutions, which should be allowed ample time to soak through the mass; care must also be observed to wash the sponges thoroughly with plenty of water at the end of the operation.

THOU ART COMING.

Thou sayest thou art coming,

But my waiting heart says, no;

For 'twould be but the dawning

Of the happy long ago.

'Tis but a tinsel vision

That is flitting o'er my sight—

I know full well thou wilt not come,

'Tis not yet the end of night.

Thou sayest thou art coming

Across the waving heather—

Art coming with the katy-dids,

That we may be together.

Coming with the falling leaves,

So faded, seared and yellow,

Art coming with the ebbing tide

Across the briny billow.

Thou sayest thou art coming

In the early autumn time,

Thou sayest thou art coming

With the reapers' lowest chime;

Then tarry not nor linger

There upon the dreary way,

But haste unto your sister

Ere the close of life's short day. B. E. H.

J. V., twenty, good looking, and in good circumstances. Respondent must be musical, and not over twenty.

ADA, tall, and rare hair, cheerful and loving. Respondent must be tall and in a good position.

MABEL H., medium height, fair, and very affectionate. Respondent should be dark and in the Navy.

W. G., 5ft. 8in., dark, hazel eyes, with a little money. Respondent must be young and loving.

BROAD ARROW, seventeen, tall, fair, blue eyes, and can speak French. Respondent must be under thirty and in the Navy.

HENRY, nineteen, 5ft. 7in., fair, blue eyes, respectfully connected, and in a good business. Respondent must be fair, ladylike, not over nineteen, and of a loving disposition.

BESSIE, twenty, tall, with a dark complexion. Respondent must be about twenty, dark, good looking and fond of home.

FANNY C., twenty-six, medium height, dark, affectionate. Respondent must be between twenty-six and thirty-six.

NELLIE, nineteen, wishes to correspond with a respectable young man, tall, dark, loving, and fond of home; a soldier preferred.

HELES, seventeen, wishes to correspond with a respectable young man, dark, medium height, and a gardener preferred.

PARTY LUCY, tall, fair, good looking, well educated, and entitled to money on her wedding-day. Respondent must be a tall, fair gentleman, with a good income.

ROVING TOM, twenty-one, 5ft. 7in., dark, good looking, good tempered, and has a little money. Respondent must be about nineteen, and a native of London.

WILLIE G., nineteen, tall, light hair, light gray eyes, fair complexion, and in a very good position. Respondent must be dark and fond of home.

KATE ANN, nineteen, tall, rather dark, fond of home, good-natured, and fond of music, singing, and dancing. Respondent must be kind-hearted and able to keep a wife.

BELLA DONNA and LILY, natives of Ireland, and sisters; "Bella Donna," twenty-three, tall, slight, brown hair, gray eyes, considered pretty; and "Lily," seventeen, a

blonde, and pretty. Respondents must be tall, handsome and able to keep a wife comfortably.

LOVELY CHARLIE, twenty-one, tall, dark, very affectionate; a clerk in a good position, and a teetotaler, wishes to correspond with a young lady, about eighteen or nineteen, pretty, and thoroughly domesticated.

A WIDOWER, fifty-nine, alone in the world, 6ft., stout, considered good looking, educated, and having a small income, wishes to correspond with a lady similarly circumstanced.

LOUISE BELL, tall, dark, considered good looking, and understands housekeeping, would like to correspond with a handsome, tall, fair, gentleman, not under thirty-one, going abroad.

MAUDE N., twenty-two, tall, good tempered, loving, fair, dark hazel eyes, brown curly hair, a good figure, musical, and accomplished. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, and not more than twenty-five years of age.

LOUIS B., twenty-four, 5ft. 11in., dark, handsome, has a good income, and would make a loving husband; wishes to correspond with a lady about twenty-one with a view to matrimony.

M. H. H., nineteen, blue eyes, fair complexion, considered good looking, affectionate and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, about twenty-two, and must occupy a good position.

LOVING MAGGIE would like to correspond with a gentleman in the army. She is fond of music and dancing, and perfectly domesticated. One in the Royal Horse Artillery preferred.

ANTIQUARY, twenty, 6ft. 11in., brown curly hair, fair complexion, and holding a good position. Respondent must be a lady, tall, fair, not more than nineteen, and fond of music.

FRED, twenty, 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, considered good looking, desires to correspond with a young lady not more than nineteen, loving, good looking, and with a small income.

FANNIE, twenty, of middle height, brown hair and blue eyes, desires to correspond with a young tradesman, who must be tall and dark, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

GIRTY QUEEN, twenty-four, medium height, thoroughly domesticated, of a loving disposition, and would make a good wife to a man, about thirty, who thinks of going into business. He must be tall, brown hair and eyes, and of steady habits.

A SEA BIRD and STUDDING SAIL—"A Sea Bird," twenty-three, 5ft. 10in., fair hair, and light blue eyes. "Studding Sail," twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., very dark complexion, hazel eyes, and good looking. Both in the Navy. Respondents must be about twenty, good looking, able to sing and dance, wash a shirt, and cook a dinner.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

EUDORA is responded to by—"Salathiel" twenty-one, 5ft. 10in., brown hair, hazel eyes, in a good position, and could give love for love; by—"Fred," twenty-one, rather tall, fair, in a good mercantile house in the city, and a thorough musician; and by—"F. B. L.," 5ft. 6in., stout, fair, in a good position, has been many years abroad, and is desirous of settling at home.

OLIVER by—"Allie E. H.," twenty, dark hair and eyes, considered pretty; loving and domesticated.

SOPHIA by—"Oliver," who is medium height, rather dark, and very amiable.

VALERIE by—"W. A. F.," thirty-two, 5ft. 11in., dark, and possesses an income of 160*l.* per annum.

WILL-O'-THE-WISPS by—"Minnie," a widow, thirty-eight, domesticated, with no encumbrances.

C. B. by—"E. P.," dark, loving, and occupying a good position.

T. R. by—"C. Clarissa," eighteen, tall, fair, pretty, and she is also competent for the stage.

S. R. X. by—"A. B.," nineteen, medium height, fair, musical and domesticated.

FRED T. by—"J. C.," who is considered, good looking, and is fond of home.

BLISS PERVA by—"L. S. P.," twenty, tall, light hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, considered good looking, loving and domesticated.

MAY T. by—"M.," twenty-four, 5ft. 9in., in business for three years, and has an income of about 35*l.* a year.

LOVELY BACHELOR by—"Fanny," nineteen, a tradesman's daughter, who would do her best to make "Lonely Bachelor" happy; and by—"Sea Shell," who is a good housekeeper, good looking, fair complexion, and has a small income of her own.

JACOB O. by—"B. T. H.," twenty-five, dark complexion and domesticated; by—"Nellie B.," who is considered pretty, is of amiable disposition, and would make a loving little wife; and by—"M. N.," medium height, brown hair, light blue eyes, respectfully connected, and holds a Government situation.

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